# VINDICATION

Of fome TRUTHS of

## NATURAL and REVEALED

# RELIGION:

In ANSWER to the

# FALSE REASONING

# Mr. JAMES FOSTER,

On VARIOUS SUBJECTS;

On Mysteries.

On the LIGHT of NA- Of REGENERATION. TURE, OF REASON.

On MIRACLES.

RULES of INTERPRET- On God, not an ARBI-ING the HOLY SCRIP-TURE.

On HERESY. On Schism.

On the Image of GoD in MAN.

On God, no RESPECTER of PERSONS.

TRARY BEING.

Of Justification.

On the MEDIATION of

#### To which is added,

A Dialogue between a Calvinist, a Socinian, an Arminian, a Baxterian, and a Deift. Wherein the chief Arguments, for the Support of each Scheme, are advanced: And the most material Objections, against Calvinism, are answered. In this Dialogue, the Reader may clearly discover the small Difference there is between Baxterianism, and Arminianism; and how Arminianism leads to Socinianism, and that to Deism.

### FOHN BRINE.

#### LONDON:

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#### THE

# PREFACE.

ANY seem to account it the Glory of this I inquisitive and enlightened Age, that Religion is thought to contain nothing mysterious, or above the Comprehension of Men. It must, I think, be confessed, that herein they widely differ from the Sentiments of the Generality of Christians, who lived in former Times. A little Enquiry will convince us, that this Conceit arises not from a real Improvement in Knowledge; but from a very superficial and partial Examination of religious Principles. For

For it is as demonstrable, that Religion is founded in Mystery; as it is evident to Reason, that there is a God. If I mistake not, it is fully proved in the following Sheets, that the Principles of natural Religion in great Part are mysterious, or incomprehensible: And that it is so far from being true, that Religion ends where a Mystery begins, that on the contrary, there it commences.

'Tis not in the least Degree dishonourable to our Reason to assert, that there are Truths, which demand our most religions Regard, whose Nature far exceeds our Comprehension. It can't be so, if it is rational to believe the Existence of a Being, who is infinitely above us. Which at present, I suppose, may be taken for granted. But how long this will be allowed by some Men, I shall not pretend to say.

The Distinction of Things above, and contrary to Reason, is just and true. The former are Mysteries, the latter are Absurdities. 'Tis often affirmed, that our Principles are of the latter Sort. If they be so indeed, then we must either

either contradict and renounce our Reason in believing them; or not use it, or not have a sufficient Degree of Reason to discover the Absurdity of those Principles. I cannot be persuaded, that a considerable Share of Sense is necessary to discover an Absurdity; and if it is not, then without the Vanity of fancying ourselves, to be equal in Difcernment, to the very rational Gentlemen, who pronounce our Opinions abfurd; it might be apprehended, that we are capable of discerning their Absurdity, provided, we exercised that lower Degree of Reason we have. This we profest to do, and in Fact we do it; but we can possibly discover, that they are in the least contradictory to Reason; and, therefore, we are almost tempted to imagine, that those Gentlemen do not so much exceed us in good Sense, as in Prejudice, Pride and Arrogance.

If Man is a fallen Creature, he is not what God made him, nor bears his Image. I cannot but think, that a little Attention to the Dispositions. and Acts of our Minds will be sufficient to convince us, that we are far from being such, as a virtuous and holy Man wishes to be. The Happiness

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piness of an intelligent Creature, must very much confist in the Regularity of its Thoughts, the Purity of its Defires, and the Refinement of its Pleasures. If there is any one Man in the World, whose Thoughts are exactly regular, or always employed upon such Subjects, as it is proper they should be, and suitable to that Relation in which he stands to the great Creator, and the different Relations, he bears to those of his own Species, without starting aside from those important Subjects, and running on others, which are vain, idle and sinful: Whose Desires e pure, and absolutely restrained from all criminal Excess, that perpetually flow in a right Channel, and only center in what it is wife and fit to wish for the Possession of: Whose Pleasures are truly noble, whose Delight is in God, as the chief Good, and not at all in the Creature, but as a real Good, derived from him, and altogether under that Consideration; I say, if there is such a Man in the World, he stands distinguished from all others in Happiness, whether he is a Prince or a Peasant; and is what I should wish to be. But alas! no such Man is to be found among us; and, confequently,

All Men are Transgressors, and if Punishment in Justice is due to a Breach of Duty, then the whole human Species are subject to Penalty, and must be in a miserable State. Reason itself affords us evident Proof of this melancholy Truth. But Reason cannot discover how a guilty Creature may recover its Holiness and Happiness. Revelation alone acquaints us with the Method of Salvation; but as that Method bides Pride from Man, and obliges us to an Acknowledgement of our great Guiltiness, Depravity, and Unworthiness, and utter Incapacity to contribute in any Measure to our Recovery from deserved Ruin, Men can't be reconciled to it. They are very unwilling to allow, that they have destroyed themselves, and that in God alone is their Help. These are the two principal Things in Dispute between Mr. Foster and myself.

I am willing to hope, that not only the miferable Condition of Men by Nature, is proved; but also, that Salvation is of God alone, and entirely, if these two things are done, I shall rejoice; because to contribute, as far as I am able, to the

Conviction

Conviction of Men, of their wretched State by Nature, and to direct them to look for Help and Succour from the God of all Grace, through the Mediation of Jesus Christ, that God and the Redeemer may share the whole Praise of their Salvation, I hope, is the Height of my Ambition.

With respect to the Dialogue, which I have added to what is wrote in Answer to Mr. Foster. Jome it may be, will censure it very heavily, because an Attempt is therein made to prove, that Baxterianism leads directly to Arminianism; they may perhaps do this out of an Esteem for the Memory of Mr. Baxter, and from an Apprehension not only of his Piety, but of the Piety of many, who embrace his Scheme. To which, I would answer three Things, First, I hope Piety is not confined wholly to his Principles: Without the least Restection on him or his Followers; I think it may be allowed, that the first Reformers, who thought the Doctrine of Justification by the Righteousness of Christ alone to be of the greatest Importance, were not his Inferiors in Piety, nor bebind any of his Followers, in real Holiness and the Power of Religion. Secondly,

I am free to fay, it is not the Piety of any Per-Jon, that gains my Affent to his Principles, if they are not to be supported by Scripture, I shall always think myfelf, at full Liberty to reject them, how great an Opinion foever I may have of his religious Temper and Deportment. Thirdly, I can't but think, that any Man, who will allow himself, impartially to consider Mr. Baxter's Sentiments, and compare them with Arminian Principles, he will foon discover, that they naturally tend to Arminianism. And what is melancholy to express, the Fact is capable of fult Proof, from many Churches, who have first fallen into Baxterianism, and then funk into direct Arminianism, which in Reality is at no great Remove from Socinianism; forthat we have now, numerous Dissenters, whose Belief can hardly be called by a better Name, and it may be expected, that in a little time, we shall have Numbers of Dissenters turn Deists. I fear it; I wish my Fears may prove groundless. Another thing, I would observe is, some it is probable may not like this way of Writing, through a Suspicion that Partiality is used in the Management of the Debate. I must confess, that this is too often done in Dialogues,

alogues, which has not a little prejudiced me against this Method of Writing. But I beg leave to say, that I have not offered any thing, in a way of Argument on the Socinian, Arminian, or Baxterian Principles, but what has been faid by the Parties themselves; and their Books are almost always referred to, and, I hope, the Reader will not see Cause to charge me with neglecting to express the strongest Things, which they have advanced in Favour of their Sentiments. This I am sure, I may say, that to my Knowledge, I have not in a single Instance, been guilty of fuch an Omission. If what is penn'd, may be useful to guard any against Soul-destroying Errors, or convince Gain sayers, or confirm, in the least Degree, the Faith of the Saints, I shall rejoice: And desire, that God may have the Praise.

#### ERRATA.

PAGE 194. Line 6. read doth not. p. 216. l. 31. r. it has been. p. 237. l. 21. for propitious, r. reconciled. p. 247. l. 12. r. imputed to us. p. 294. l. 22. r. one another. p. 325. l. 23, and 24. for and Sin was the moving Cause of it, read, and Sin the meritorious Cause of the Punish-ment decreed.

Some literal Escapes the Reader is desired to excuse, and mend with his Pen.



A

# VINDICATION

OF

Some TRUTHS, of NATURAL and REVEALED RELIGION.

### CHAP. I.

### Of Mysteries.

R. Foster, in treating on the Subject of Mysteries, stiffly maintains, that there are, properly speaking, no Mysteries in Religion. He seems to apprehend, that he has effectually set aside every Article of the Christian Faith, which is of a mysterious Nature. Before I enter upon the Consideration of what he advances on this Subject, I apprehend, it is necessary to give the Reader a clear Account, of what is intended by a Mystery, when the Term is applied to the Principles of natural and revealed Religion: Or what it is we mean, when we say that those Principles are mysterious.

B

1. By a Mystery we do not intend any abfurd Doctrine; or any Principle which is contrary to Reason, and contradicts what we certainly know, by our Senses, must be true. That some nominal Christians, viz. the Papists, have advanced abfurd Principles, fuch as are repugnant to Reason and Sense, is well known; and that they impose upon Men, the Belief of those Principles, under a Pretence of Mystery, is too notorious to admit of the least Doubt. The Doctrine of Transubstantiation, for Instance, is contrary to all Reason and Sense: It requires us to believe, that a Multitude of Miracles are wrought, without the least Appearance of any Change, in that, whereon, they are effected, as they are pleased to tell us. This Doctrine therefore, is no Mystery, but a manifest Absurdity. 2. We do not mean by a Mystery, any thing unknown, as to its Being and Truth: Or we do not imagine, that fome particular Things are, of whose Being and Truth we have no Evidence. Such an Imagination is exceeding weak; for that is no other than to believe, that a Thing is, without any Proof at all, of its Being or Truth. And, therefore, were we to believe the Being of that Thing, whether in Fact it is, or it is not, our Belief that it is, must be entirely without Foundation; confequently, how much foever we might be perfuaded, that fuch a Thing is; at present, tho' that Thing may really be, our Persuasion that it is, can have nothing to support it. But, 3. What we mean by

by a Mystery is this: That the Nature of a Thing, which we have clear Evidence really is, either from Reason or Revelation, is above our Comprehension. We cannot understand how it is, tho' we most certainly know that in Fact it is. Clear Ideas we may have of the Being, or Truth of a Thing, notwithstanding, we may be utterly unable to explain the Nature and Mode of it. This is what we intend by a Mystery, when we use the Word on re-

ligious Subjects.

And I dare venture to affert, that if Mr. Foster, will not allow, that some Things must be believed to be true, the Nature of which he cannot explain, he will be driven into direct Atheism,—that he will unavoidably be compelled to renounce, not only revealed, but natural Religion also, and be obliged to embrace the most palpable Absurdities. may flourish as much as they please, in arguing against Mysteries in Religion, and, by so doing, they may perhaps obtain with superficial Thinkers the Character of ingenious Reafoners; but, if they are in earnest, I am confident, that they must embrace what is most evidently abfurd and irrational. There is no Medium, I am certain; we must either believe what we cannot account for, or we must be persuaded of that, which, if we will attend to the plainest Dictates of our Reason, we shall clearly difcern cannot possibly be true. The Reader will find, in confidering what Mr. Foster delivers, that this is plain Truth, and that

that he is not in Fact against Mysteries in Religion; for the whole amount of his Reasoning on this Subject, is only this; that Religion don't oblige us to explain what is, in its Nature inexplicable; which is as evident a Truth, as that two and two make four. may be, will entertain an Opinion, that he really has some Adversary to deal with, and that he hath obtain'd a glorious Victory; but it is wholly a Mistake. He has no Opponent except in his own Imagination: The Conquest he has gain'd, is only over a Man of Straw, which he was pleased to make up, unmercifully to beat and kick about, for his Diversion, as long as he thought proper. Having explain'd what a Mystery is: That it is some Truth which exceeds our Comprehension: I proceed to shew.

First, that there are some mysterious Truths,

which Reason clearly suggests to us, as,

1. A Duration without Beginning. Such a Duration we know must necessarily have been; because it is absurd to conceive, that all Duration commenced, for it must commence, either by the Will of God, or by the Will of a Creature: If by the Will of God, then, God was, when there was no Duration: If by the Will of a Creature, then, the Creature must be before Time, or Duration, wherein it exists, which is impossible.

2. That God is an eternal and necessary Being; that he ever was, and that he is not by the Will of another, for then he could not

be God; but must be a dependent and precarious Being: Not by his own Will, for this necessarily supposes, that his Will was prior to himself.

3. That all created Beings once were not, and that they were made out of nothing. That no Creature could exist from Eternity is evident; for that which eternally existed, owes its Being to no Cause; it must therefore be independent and subject to none; and that which is so, will necessarily remain for ever, what it is without any Mutation. And, therefore, whatever is created, had originally no Principle of which it was form'd. How Matter should rise into Being out of nothing, is to us absolutely inexplicable: And yet, if we will not run into the most manifest Absurdities, we must believe, that it was produced out of a Non-entity.

4. That all Creatures were formed in a meafurable Duration, which is taken out of an
immeasurable eternal Duration. As it is impossible for us to measure such a Duration;
so we cannot conceive in what Point of that
Duration Time began: Or imagine how a Duration that has Beginning, is taken out of a
Duration, which had none. For let us conceive all imaginable Number of Ages to have
run on, in a Duration without Commencement, we shall still be at an infinite Distance
from determining in what Point of that Duration Time began. And, therefore, Eternity,
a Parte ante, is no other than a negative Idea,
or it is we know not what. Tho' we cannot

explain either of these Things, yet our Belief of them is not without Ideas. We have rational Evidence, that these Things are, and for that Reason we affent to them as undoubted Truths. What we believe is, that they really are; not the Mode of them, or how they be; neither is this required: And, therefore, to fay, that fince it is the Mode of these Things, which constitutes them Mysteries, and we not believing any Thing with Relation to their Mode; a Persuasion that those Things are, is not a Belief of Mysteries, is downright Fallacy and not Reasoning. We contend that mysterious Things are, and that they must be believed to be true; but not that the Mode of those Things, is either known or believed; for that implies a Contradiction, viz. that these Things are incomprehenfible, and yet are comprehended. We require an Affent only to the Truth of these Things being, and not to the Manner how they be.

All these Particulars are Branches of natural Religion. Unless we assent to the Truth of them, we can have no Religion at all. This I think must be evident to every intelligent Person. Duration without Beginning, is a fundamental Principle of the Religion of Nature. For if such a Duration is not allow'd, it undeniably follows, that once there was no God; because Duration must be granted, if any Being is thought to exist; immeasurable and unlimited, if that Being is infinite; limited and finite, if that Being is circumscribed and finite.

finite. That God is an eternal and necessary Being, is also a fundamental Principle of the Religion of Nature. For, should it be thought that once God was not, we can have no Demonstration of the Existence of Deity: Nay, upon that Supposition, it is demonstrable that there is no God. If he eternally is, he necessarily must be, and exists not by Vertue of the Will of any other Being, nor by Vertue of his own Will; because to will, is an Act of some Being that now is; for a Non-ens, or what is not, cannot will at all; and by Consequence, cannot will to be. Again, that all Matter once was not, is a Principle of natural Religion; for if it eternally was, it necessarily was; this is most evident. That which is eternal, ever existed; and whatever always existed, was brought into Being by none, nor could give Being to itself. And, that which is independent wirh Relation to its Being, must be fo in the Mode of its Being. And, therefore, if Matter eternally was, it could not be fubject to any Change. Besides, the Creation of the World, in a Duration which has Beginginning, and commencing in a Duration, which had none, is another fundamental Principle of natural Religion. That a Duration must have been, which had no Commencement, is most demonstrable, and if the World, is not eternal, then in some Point, of that immeasurable Duration, it must have begun to be. Which Thing, tho' we most certainly know it is true, we cannot explain, it is infi-B 4

nitely above us. These Principles which Reafon plainly dictates to us, are far beyond the Reach of our limited Faculties. We infallibly know they are; but we cannot conceive how they be. Hence, it is as clear as any Truth can possibly be, that we must either admit Things into our Belief, which exceed our Understanding, or we must become Atheists, and deny all Religion. And not only fo; but we cannot avoid, if we will exclude Mysteries from our Faith, running into the most manifest Absurdities: Such as these, that once there was no Duration, nor any Being, infinite or finite: That the World rose into Being without any Cause, or that that which once was not, produced itself; and, consequently, that there is no first Cause or Almighty God, to whom Men are accountable for their Actions. It will be impossible for any Man to refuse Credit to these most monstrous Absurdities, if all Mysteries are excluded from human Assent and Faith.

From hence it appears, that this Assertion of Mr. Foster's, as it may be understood, can never be defended upon the Principles of natural Religion; viz. As we cannot in Reason, we are not obliged by Revelation, to carry our Faith one fot beyond our Understanding (a). Some may take this to be the Sense of this Assertion, that we are not obliged to believe any Thing that we cannot comprehend; and it is capable of such a Construction, the I do

not

<sup>(°)</sup> Vol I. of Sermons, p. 170.

not understand this to be his Meaning; for there is a Fallacy in it, which I shall acquaint the Reader with hereafter, whereby, he will discern, that Mr. Foster's Reasoning, if I must call it fo, concludes nothing at all to his Purpose. If the Truths above-mentioned, are Branches of natural Religion, and if they are incomprehensible, we are, as Men, indispenfably obliged to affent to Things as true, which far exceed our Understanding. We plainly perceive that they are true, and as evidently difcern, that they are inexplicable or myste-This Gentleman allows, that the Manner of God's creating the World, -that the Manner of God's Omnipresence,—that the Manner of the general Refurrection, and the like,—cannot be accounted for, and observes, that, it is no Part of our Religion, to account for the Manner of either of these Things (b). The Truth of which Observation, I am perfuaded, no Mortal will ever dispute. It is God's creating all Things out of nothing, by the Exertion of his Almighty Power, that is believed; and not the Manner of it. And, therefore, I should think, that Mr. Foster must be compelled to grant, that there are fome Things to be believed true, which we are unable to account for the Manner of. This is all we contend for, as he himself, proceeds to mention. For, I would ask, says he, does the most warm and forward Enthusiast pretend to believe more than that thefe Things

are true? Does he believe any Thing at all with Respect to the Manner of them? Nay, is not bis urging that it is mysterious and incomprehenfible, a Demonstration, that he, himself, knows he can believe nothing particularly about it (°). Mr. Foster and the Enthusiast it seems are exactly of the same Opinion in this Matter, viz. That these Things are incomprehensible; nevertheless, I suppose, he believes them to be true, as well as the Enthusiast, and therefore, certainly, he can't esteem it Enthusiasm, to affent to the Truth of fuch Things being, the Mode of whose Being, neither he, nor any other Man is able to understand. Why then, does he call another an Enthusiast, and a warm forward Enthusiast, for believing Things incomprehensible, which are a Part of his own Creed? And at the Time acquit him of the Abfurdity of pretending to explain Truths, which are allow'd to be inexplicable. The Enthusiast, as Mr. Foster is pleased to call him, acts no other Part, than what is rational: For there is the clearest Reason to believe, that these Things are, and therefore, the Belief of them is built upon a fure and folid Foundation. And fince he pretends not to do, what is impossible to be done, for what Cause, does he give him the odious Character of an Enthusiast? If the Belief of the Truth of these Things is Enthusiasm, Mr. Foster must be an Enthusiast, for he certainly believes, that God made the World out of nothing.that

<sup>( )</sup> Page 171.

that he exists every where,—that all the dead shall be raised and the like.—But, I am persuaded, that he will never act so irrationally, as pretend to account for the Manner of either of them, any more, than the warm and forward Enthusiast will attempt it. I beg leave to observe several Things here, that are of considerable Importance, and which are naturally deducible from what has been now said.

1. We Enthusiasts, as Mr. Foster calls us. plead for nothing more, than that the mysterious and incomprehenfible Nature of a Thing is no just Objection to its Truth.-That we have the clearest Reason to conclude, that natural Religion, in great Part, consists of such Things.—That those Things ought to be firmly believed. Because we know, that none but down-right Atheists, who have no religious Principles at all, can refuse an Assent to them, and that they must unavoidably fall into Absurdities of the groffest Kind by a Denial of them. 2. If a Man believes a Thing to be, when he hath clear Evidence, that it certainly is, altho' the Mode of its Being, is to him unknown; fo long as he does not pretend to explain its Mode, he acts a wife and rational Part; because his Affent to the Truth of that inexplicable Thing, is gain'd by a full and proper Evidence, that that Thing is. 3. In that Case it can't be faid, that this Man believes without Ideas: For, his Belief of the Being of that Thing, is founded upon, or refults from his Ideas that

Ideas of its Being are raised in his Mind, by clear and evident Proofs, that it really is. Herein, we know what we believe; viz. that such a Thing is, tho' we understand not how it is. Thus, we believe, that the Loadstone and Iron mutually attract, upon undeniable Evidence, that they so do; but we cannot

explain the Nature of that Attraction.

4. It follows hence, that a Mystery is something, which we cannot thoroughly understand or account for. It is not, a Thing's barely being unknown, that makes it a Mys-Things in themselves plain and easy to be understood, when they are told us, may be unknown, as the Cause of the Eclipses of the Sun and Moon. But it is easy to conceive, that the Interposition of the Moon between the Sun and the Earth, prevents its Rays shining upon us; and that the Interpolition of the Earth between those Bodies, hinders the Moon's Reception of Light from the Sun. The Cause of the Solar, and Lunar Eclipses, was once unknown; but properly speaking, it was not then a Mystery. A proper Mystery is some Truth, whose Nature will not admit of Explication. Until discovered, it was a Secret; but upon the Discovery of it, that Cause is clearly and fully apprehended; which can never be faid of any Thing, whose Nature is mysterious, and incomprehensible.

5. It is a Mistake, that a Thing ceases to be a Mystery, when it is shewn, revealed, and known

known to be. For, as Things, in themselves, plain and easy to be understood, may be unknown: So Things, that are as to their Nature inexplicable, may be shewn, revealed, and known to be. The Revelation of a Thing which is mysterious, acquaints us with its Being; but for Want of Capacity to conceive of it, as it is in itself, the Manner of it, how clearly foever we perceive that it is, is still to us unknown. The Difference is very great between knowing that a Thing is, and understanding how it is. This, I am sure, is capable of the clearest Demonstration, from natural Principles, or independent of divine Revelation. For Instance, we most certainly know, by just Reasoning, that nothing can have had eternal Existence but God; and that therefore the World, was created out of nothing; but tho' there is not any Truth, that we have a more clear Perception of, yet it is far from ceasing to be a Mystery, upon that evident Sense, which, by a proper Train of Reasoning, we obtain of its Certainty. It is, indeed, a Truth, that some Philosophers, thro' Blindness and Stupidity, have not discovered; but the clear Discovery we make of it, by just and easy Reasoning, changes not its Nature, 'tis still a Mystery. A Mystery it is that was unknown to many, to us it is a Mystery that is most clearly perceived, and by us most firmly believed, tho' we are absolutely unable to explain it. 6.

6. It is mere Fallacy, and not Reasoning, to fay, that fince the Manner of Things inexplicable, is not known or believed, nor required fo to be, that there are, properly speaking, no Mysteries in Religion;—that we are not obliged to carry our Faith one Jot beyond our Understanding; and that it is no Part of our religious Obligations, to account for the Manner of Things, which we don't understand. We are not fuch Fools, as to imagine, that Men are bound to explain Things, whose Nature is inexplicable. And, we have, at least, Sense enough to know, that Gentlemen, who pretend, that Mysteries are not believed, i. e. that incomprehenfible Things are not affented to, because their Nature, which is latent and hid from us, is not explained and believ'd, fay nothing to the Purpose. They advance an absurd Sense, which no Man believes, and then demolish it: And triumph, as if they had really gain'd a Conquest, whereas, in Fact, they have no Opposers, but in their own wild Imagination.

This is the fallacious Part, that Mr. Foster acts. If we do not contend, that Things above our Comprehension, are to be explained, or that the Manner of those Things is to be declared and believed, then all he says, is a mere Waste of Words. He only imposes upon his Reader, in endeavouring to make him believe, that he is manfully combating with some silly Adversary or other; and is at great Pains to demolish an Absurdity, which, I am

of Opinion, he cannot prove, hath been advanced by a fingle Man. It was not, I think, possible for him, to speak more impertinently on the Subject of Mysteries, than he has done. What we plead for, as Men, is, that our Reafon leads us to conclude, that there are some evident Truths, which exceed our Comprehenfion, that we are obliged to believe those Truths, and that our Belief of them is rational, because we have clear and undeniable Evidence, of those Things being true, viz. That there hath been a Duration, which had no Beginning.—That God is an eternal and necessary Being. That once nothing but God did exist, and that therefore, all Things were made out of nothing. That all Things were created in a measurable Duration, taken out of, or commencing, in an eternal immeafurable Duration. I suppose the Truth of none of these Things, this Gentleman will call into Question. And if not, then he believes Things which exceed his Understanding: Or, he affents to some Things as true, which he must be obliged to allow are inexplicable and mysterious. Hence it appears undeniably, that Things may be discovered, or shewn, revealed and known to be, the Manner of which is still unknown, and therefore we denominate them Mysteries. Since, Mr. Foster takes no Notice, in what Sense, we use the Word Mystery, but vehemently opposes and severely condemns requiring Faith without Ideas, as if that was the Matter we intend; whereas we defign

fign no fuch Thing; he fights without an Adversary, and exposes an absurd Principle, which he has framed to himself, a Principle, which he never found, I am persuaded, advanc'd by the weakest Person he would be thought to oppose. The Ideas we form of a Thing, either respect its Being merely, or its Mode together with its Being. The latter, is true only, of fuch Things, whose Nature we are able to explain, and therefore they are not Mysteries, nor do any account them fo. The former. relate to fuch Things, which, tho' we know they are, we cannot conceive how they be, and therefore we call them Mysteries. For Instance, we believe that God created all Things out of nothing: We know what we believe in this Matter, viz. that whatever is created. once had no Being at all. Our Idea is clear of the Non-existence of all Things once, as well as the Idea of the Being of Things we fee exist; but of the Manner of the Production of all Things out of nothing, we have no Idea, nor can we have any fuch Idea, for it is not possible to a finite Mind. Hence it is certain. that we know what we believe, viz. that it is a Truth, that all finite Beings once were not, and that they rose into Existence, merely by Vertue of the Will of God, that they should be. But, as it is only the Truth of this that is believed, and not the Manner of their Production, it most clearly follows, that the' we have Ideas, fo far as our Faith is carried in this Point, yet it can't be faid, that we comprehend

hend this self-evident Truth, for we plainly perceive, that it contains more than we are able to understand.

If therefore, Mr. Foster's Meaning, is, when he says, that we are not obliged to carry our Faith one fot beyond our Understanding, that we are not bound to believe the Manner of a Thing, the Mode of which we cannot understand, he disputes, I think, with no Body; if he apprehends he does, let him tell us, what silly Creature has advanced this absurd Principle, that Men are obliged to believe, that SO such a Thing is, the Manner of which it is impossible to know. If this is not his Meaning, all he says is a mere Flourish of Words, he beats the Air, and sights with a Phantom, which, perhaps, no Man, but him-sals, over dreams of

felf, ever dreamt of.

This I take to be his true Meaning, tho' it is fallacious, and most evidently impertinent: For, this can be no Objection to any Truth of natural or revealed Religion, or to the Belief of any mysterious and incomprehensible Doctrine, which Reason, or Revelation, afford us sufficient Evidence that it is true. If he intends, that we are not obliged to believe the Truth of Things, which we cannot account for, or conceive the Manner of, he must necessarily conclude, that we are not obliged to believe a Duration without Beginning,—or that God is an eternal and necessary Being,—or that the World was made out of nothing,—or that it was formed in

a measurable Duration, which commenced in an eternal and immeasurable one. These are Principles we are bound to believe, as Men, tho' we cannot comprehend them. If therefore, he defigns not to be an Advocate for the most absurd and atheistical Notions, nothing he offers, affects the Sentiments of the Enthufiast, he would be understood to oppose. The Enthusiast does not need Mr. Foster's Information to acquaint him, that in believing mysterious Truths, his Faith exceeds not his Understanding, he knows it perfectly as well, as that Gentleman may pretend to know it. He understands, that those incomprehensible Things are true, as guided by Reason, or Revelation, or by both; and the Truth of these Things is all he believes. It is therefore granted, that his Faith is not stretched beyond his Understanding; because it is the Truth of those Things he understands, and it is their Truth only that he believes, not the Manner of them. This is all, I think, that Mr. Foster can possibly mean, for furely, he will never fay, nay, I know he will never fay, that no Truth is the Object of human Faith, the Nature of which Men cannot understand. He must therefore allow, that Mysteries are believed, how much foever it may be against his Inclination to grant it. It is one Thing to perceive that such a Thing is true, and another to understand the Nature of it. When we apprehend both the Truth of a Thing, and its Nature, it can't be called a Mystery: But when we discern the Truth

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Truth of any Thing, and are yet unable to understand the Nature of that Thing, we call it, what it really is, viz. a Mystery. The Truth of that Thing, we believe, but not the Nature of it.

By this Time, I hope, the Reader clearly perceives the Fallacy of this Affertion: As we cannot in Reason, we are not obliged by Revelation to carry our Faith one Jot beyond our Understanding. The Sense is this, we are not obliged to believe, that SO fuch a Thing is, the Mode of which we cannot understand; which is certainly true; but the Conclusion to be inferred from it, is as apparently false; viz. that we are not obliged to believe any Truth that is incomprehenfible. And if we do believe an incomprehensible Truth, i. e. a Mystery; it is not believed, as it is a Mystery, but as it is a Truth; because it is understood, as it is a Truth, but not as it is a Mystery. A wonderful Discovery! It is what we perfectly knew, before we were told it by Mr. Foster. Reasoning, when I am able to discern it, always brings its Charms; and as it readily gains my Assent, it never fails to give me Pleasure; but a fallacious Way of arguing, I cannot but despise; because it is only calculated to deceive, and ferve the Interest of Error, to the Suppression of amiable Truth.

As to what the Author says, about our being puzzled and confounded by Mysteries (d) it is a gross Mistake. No Man is puzzled and

<sup>(</sup>d) Page 173.

confounded when he hath clear Ideas: Clear Ideas we have of the Truth of the mysterious Things before expressed. We can with as much Ease conceive, that all created Things, once did not exist, and arrive at a Certainty, that they once were not; as we can perceive, that there is a vast Variety of dependent Beings. Some Philosophers dreaming that the World is eternal, or that it always was, is no Objection to this. It is a Proof of their egregious Folly and Stupidity, who professing them-

felves to be wife, became Fools (.).

If there is any one Principle felf-evident, this is fo; that whatever always was, necessarily was, and must be independent, both with Relation to its Being, and the Mode of its Being, and, confequently, it cannot but eternally remain, what it ever hath been, and now is. Men, therefore, are not puzzled with the clear Truth of the Production of all Things out of nothing, which by just and easy Reasoning, they plainly discover must be true. If, indeed, they will fet themselves to enquire HOW the World was made out of nothing, they will unavoidably be puzzled and confounded, and their Reason will be non-plus'd. But this is not their Business; what is reasonably expected of them to believe is, that the numerous Creatures they fee are, once were not; and that they were brought into Being by the Almighty Power of God, tho' they cannot conceive how. And the same might

<sup>(</sup>c) Rom. i. 22,

be observed of other mysterious Truths. Clear Ideas we have, of the Being and Truth of the Things, tho' not of the Nature and Mode of those Things. And therefore, Mr. Foster's dogmatically saying, they are really nothing at all to us, concludes just nothing. This Point he finishes with an insulting Air, he asks, if there is any Advantage merely in being in the dark, and having no Ideas? In the dark we are not as to the Truth of mysterious Things, tho' we cannot explain the Mode of those Things. Ideas we have of the Being and Truth of such Things, tho' we have not of the Manner of them.

Farther, the Gentleman afferts, that Things which are shewn, revealed, and known, cease to be Mysteries ('). This Affertion, I can't but think, must most plainly appear false to every considerate Person. We know that a Duration without Beginning must have been; but it don't cease to be a Mystery, upon the clearest

Perception we have of its Certainty.

We as clearly apprehend this fundamental Truth of natural Religion, to be infinitely beyond the Reach of our Understanding, as we can discover that such a Duration hath most certainly been: And, therefore, it ceases not to be a Mystery upon the evident Knowledge we acquire of its Truth. If Mr. Foster had said, that when a Thing is revealed, and the Revelation of its Being is understood, it is no longer unknown or hid; every Man would have affented

<sup>(</sup>f) Page 167, 168.

fented to the Truth of it. But that is not the Matter under Consideration. Who will fay that a Thing is concealed, when it is clearly revealed and known to be a Truth upon that clear Revelation of it? Not the Enthusiast Mr. Foster opposes. The Question is plainly this, whether there are not fome Things, which we know are true, the Manner of which we cannot understand? If this is allow'd, all we contend for is granted. Many such Things there are, at least, in natural Religion, if there are none such in revealed. And if Reason dictates to us some Truths which exceed our Comprehension, or the Manner of which we know nothing at all of, and yet we act wifely in believing those Truths; is it unreasonable to suppose, that there may be other Truths, of an incomprehenfible Nature, that Reason could never discover? Surely no Man can imagine this. And if the incomprehenfible Nature of those Truths, which Reason is capable of discovering, is no just Objection to them, why should the mysterious Nature of fome other Truths revealed by God to Men, be thought a folid Objection to them, and be esteem'd sufficient to justify us in a Denial of those Truths?

Mr. Foster hath another extraordinary Affertion, which it will be proper in a particular Manner, to consider and examine; it is this: Where the Mystery begins Religion ends (\*). I. Let me ask this Gentleman, if there is any Thing

<sup>(3)</sup> Page 171.

Thing mysterious in religious Principles? In. the Omnipresence of God for Instance, which he mentions? He is obliged to grant there is; or that the Manner of God's existing every where, cannot be accounted for. This is allowing the utmost we defire, viz. that some Truths which we ought to believe, we cannot comprehend, or account for the Manner of; and therefore, I should think, that the Difpute between Mr. Foster and us Enthusiasts. might immediately cease; for as we profess, that the Mode of God's Omnipresence, and the Manner of other mysterious Things, are to us inexplicable, we do not pretend, that it is any Part of our religious Obligations to account for them. We are not fuch Fools to be guilty of Contradictions, that are fo very evident. 2. I beg leave to observe, that a Mystery can never begin, where nothing of a mysterious Nature is. And fince he plainly allows, that there is a Mystery in this Matter, which is a Point of Faith, he grants us all we can defire, and it evidently appears, that he has been faying just nothing all this Time, and that in Reality he has no Opponent. It feems after the whole of this labour'd Dispute against Mysteries in Religion, that we are bound to believe Things, the Manner of which, we cannot account for; only it is no Part of our Religion, to account for the Manner of those Things. When Mr. Foster shall produce any Person, who hath said it is, I will readily allow, that he hath an Adversary; but I should C 4 think

think him so ridiculous and weak, as to be juftly beneath the Notice of any Man. 3. Although it is no Part of our Religion to account for the Manner of God's Omnipresence, yet it is no inconsiderable Branch thereof, to adore this incomprehensible Truth, or to reverence and fear him, who is every where present. All Adoration and true Reverence of God, arises from an Apprehension and Belief of his incomprehensible Perfections.

Religion, therefore, is so far from ending, where the Mystery, in Truths relating to God, begins; that there it commences. That Man who believes nothing farther concerning God, than he can comprehend, I am confident, will never fee cause to adore and fear him. Hence it is evident, that this jingling Sentence is so false, that nothing can be ex-

pressed which is more untrue.

Thus far, I think, we may proceed upon the Principles of natural Religion. If we attend to Revelation, we shall find, that it contain Truths, which are stiled Mysteries. speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery, even the hidden Wisdom (h). Without Controversy great is the Mystery of Godliness (1). Even the Mystery, which bath been bid from Ages and Generations past (k). And to make all Men see, what is the Fellowship of the Mystery (1). Now, either the Gospel is called a Mystery, merely, because it was once unknown, or because it confifts

<sup>(</sup>h) 1 Cor. ii. 7.

<sup>(</sup>k) Col. i. 26.

<sup>(</sup>i) 1 Tim. iii. 16. (i) Eph. iii. 9.

confifts of Doctrines, that are of a wonderful and mysterious Nature. In the former Sense only, Mr. Foster understands it. In his Opinion, it contains nothing, but what may eafily be comprehended. Its Truths do not at all exceed the Capacities of Men. There are no Heights in the Gospel, to which the human Mind cannot raise its Ideas: Nor any Depths in the deep Things of God, which the human Understanding cannot fathom. All the Doctrines of Christianity, being once revealed, are upon a Level with our reasoning Powers. In natural Religion, we have many Truths, which are above the Comprehension of Men, but the Gospel only confists of Doctrines, whose Nature, may be taken in, in its full Latitude and Extent. Our Ideas of its Principles, may not only be clear, but adequate also; for there is not any Thing, that exceeds the Reach of our narrow Minds.

This is the Doctrine, which this Gentleman teaches us; which is a Point, that ought to be very clearly proved, because it naturally leads us to reject any Doctrine, which exceeds our Comprehension. If this Principle is not fully proved, we cannot be justified in a Disbelief of other Principles, upon this Foundation. If this is found a *Prejudice* only, which has taken Possession of the Minds of Men, how will they be able to defend or excuse themselves, in the Denial of Truths, of *important* Truths, under the Instuence of this *Prejudice*? If God

has communicated to Man, the Knowledge of Things, which are above his Comprehension, in a natural Way; is it irrational to think, that the Knowledge of other mysterious Things, concerning himfelf, his Defigns, and his Operations, may be conveyed to Men, in a fupernatural Manner, or by a Revelation superadded to the Light of Nature? If we find ourselves obliged to believe Things, that are above the utmost Stretch of our Thoughts as Men; is it absurd to conceive, that as Christians, we are under fuch an Obligation: And that an Addition is made to the Number of fuch mysterious Things, we are required to believe, by a farther Revelation we have received from Heaven? If natural Religion did not contain Truths which the Mind of Man cannot thoroughly understand, it might be argued with some Shew of Probability, that the Christian Religion recommends no mysterious Principles to our ferious Regard: But fince it evidently appears, that a Man must become an Atheist, if he will not believe more than he can comprehend, what Wonder is it, if the Christian finds the Number of Truths to increase upon him, which he cannot form adequate Ideas of, by that Revelation Providence puts into his Hand? And as in believing the incomprehenfible Truths of natural Religion, it cannot be faid, either, that we renounce our Reason, or believe without Ideas; because our reasoning Powers are exercised in the Discovery of those Truths, and we form Ideas of the Truth of those

those mysterious Things, tho' not of the Mode of those Things: So it is not true, that in believing the Mysteries of revealed Religion, we either renounce our Reason, or believe without Ideas, for we employ our Reason upon Revelation, in the Discovery of its Truths, and we have Ideas of the Truth of its mysterious Doctrines, tho' not of those revealed incomprehenfible Things. It is therefore, a very weak and absurd Observation, which one Person makes, viz. this, it appeared to me a very odd Method to make a Man, a Christian, by requiring him to renounce that Faculty, which alone made bim a Man (m). But the Observation is not more absurd than it is groundless, for none require Men to renounce their Reason, in order to become Christians, that I know of, tho' it is certain they must believe, as Christians, more than they can comprehend, and so they must as Men, if they will not be Atheists, and deny all religious Principles, which if they do, I am fure, they must really renounce their Reason, and will deserve to be numbered among the Brutes, for fo doing.

Gentlemen, who allow not of Mysteries in Religion, are very free in charging others with Prepossessions and Prejudices, in forming their religious Sentiments. 'Tis therefore, highly reasonable to expect, that they should take up no Principle for granted, without evident Proof of its Truth, and especially, a Principle of so much Consequence as this is, whereby other

<sup>(</sup>m) Mr. CRUTTENDEN's Experience.

other Doctrines are to be tried, and if they are not found to agree with this, a bold Demand is immediately made upon us, to give them up. If we enquire how this Principle may be prov'd to be true, which is made a Criterion of revealed Truth; we shall plainly find considerable Difficulty will attend it. Reason can never prove it; because that most evidently leads us to embrace Doctrines, which far surpass our Comprehension. And, therefore, it cannot be irrational to believe Truths, of which we have not, nor can possibly have adequate Ideas.

By the Light of Nature, we most clearly discern that many Things are true, the Mode of which, we know nothing at all of. The Proof of this Principle therefore, must be fetched from Revelation, if it ever receives any. I ask, where do the Scriptures acquaint us, that they contain no Doctrines above our Comprehension, or that Faith is not required of us, except we thoroughly understand the Nature of the Truths to which they demand our Affent? I am not able to find any Thing like this in the Word of God. On the contrary, I find the inspired Writers speak of wonderous Things in God's Law: And of the Things of God, as deep: And of the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, and of his Judgments, as unfearchable, and of his Ways, as past finding out: And of the Gospel, tho' it is clearly revealed, as being still a Mystery: Great is (not was) the Mystery of Godliness, &c. And concerning

concerning it, as the Wisdom of God in a Mystery. This Sort of Language seems to me to suggest, that there is a Sublimity and Depth in the Gospel, which Men cannot reach or fathom. And, therefore, until I shall see it sully proved, that those losty Modes of Speech, express nothing above the Limits of the human Mind; I cannot but esteem this Principle a mere Prejudice, which is most plainly contradicted by Revelation, as well as Reafon.

Secondly, I observe that divine Revela-tion contains Mysteries, or Doctrines which are wonderful and mysterious. Mr. Foster owns that the Scriptures acquaint us with some Truths, that Reason could not discover ("). But he will not allow, that those Truths, are now Mysteries, i. e. that they are concealed; pray, Sir, who will fay they are hidden Secrets, when they are clearly revealed? Not the Enthusiast you oppose. If you say any Thing to the Purpose, you must affert, that those Things which are stiled Mysteries in the Scriptures, may be perfectly understood and accounted for by Men. You are pleased to take Notice of two Things, which the Apostle Paul calls Mysteries: The first is, as you express it, preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles (°), and refer to Rom. xvi. 25. according to the Revelation of the Mystery, which was kept secret, since the World began. This is very inaccurately observed of you; for it is not the Revelation

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 167.

Revelation of the Gospel to the Gentiles, that is there intended by the Mystery; but the Gospel itself, which is so very evident, that it is strange you did not discern it. But if you think, that the Rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, contain nothing beyond the Reach of the human Understanding, you are certainly of a different Opinion from the Apostle, who upon the Consideration thereof, expresses his Astonishment, as having in View, a boundless, a bottomless Ocean: O! the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out? The Second Mystery you mention, is the Change which will pass upon the living Saints at the coming of Christ. This you speak of, as a plain Truth in itself, and adapted to all Understandings. If you intend, that it is a Truth plainly revealed, you are right; but if you mean, that it may be perfectly understood, or that the Manner of that Change may be accounted for, you are most groffly mistaken. If you are able, be so kind, as oblige me, with a clear Explication of the Nature and Mode of that Change; which, when you have done, I will undertake any Task, you shall please to impose upon me; even, if you require it, to tell you how the World was made out of nothing. I fay, that this is a plain Truth, and that it is a Mystery. A plain Truth, because it is plainly revealed. A Mystery, because the Nature and Mode of it cannot be explain'd. explain'd. Other mysterious and inexplicable Doctrines, the evangelical Revelation acquaints us with.

1. The Doctrine of the Trinity, or the real Distinction which there is between the Father. Son, and Holy Spirit, and their effential Unity. This Doctrine, I allow, is an Absurdity, if it is not a Mystery. It is frequently reprefented as an Absurdity. At present, not to fay it is a Truth, if it is an Error, it will not foon be proved abfurd. We apprehend, that the Distinction between these Three is real; that the Father is not the Son, nor the Son the Father, and that the Holy Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son, but distinct from them both; and that they are effentially one. All the Difficulty lies, in conceiving of their real Distinction, consistent with their Oneness of Effence. This, fay fome, is abfurd, or repugnant to Reason; for there cannot be three, who have Understanding, and Will and Power to act in one Being. When we enquire how this appears absurd, the Answer given is, an intelligent Agent is an understanding Being, and therefore to fay, that three intelligent Agents are one Being, is a Contradiction. This is granted with relation to finite rational Agents; but that is no Proof, that so it is in the infinite Being of God. We know, that a finite distinct, intelligent Agent, is a distinct Being; but no Man is able to prove, that there can be but one in the infinite Being of God, who hath Understanding, and Will, and Power to act, how

Revelation of the Gospel to the Gentiles, that is there intended by the Mystery; but the Gospel itself, which is so very evident, that it is strange you did not discern it. But if you think, that the Rejection of the Jews, and the calling of the Gentiles, contain nothing beyond the Reach of the human Understanding, you are certainly of a different Opinion from the Apostle, who upon the Consideration thereof, expresses his Astonishment, as having in View, a boundless, a bottomless Ocean: O! the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out? The Second Mystery you mention, is the Change which will pass upon the living Saints at the coming of Christ. This you speak of, as a plain Truth in itself, and adapted to all Understandings. If you intend, that it is a Truth plainly revealed, you are right; but if you mean, that it may be perfectly understood, or that the Manner of that Change may be accounted for, you are most groffly mistaken. If you are able, be so kind, as oblige me, with a clear Explication of the Nature and Mode of that Change; which, when you have done, I will undertake any Task, you shall please to impose upon me; even, if you require it, to tell you how the World was made out of nothing. I fay, that this is a plain Truth, and that it is a Mystery. A plain Truth, because it is plainly revealed. A Mystery, because the Nature and Mode of it cannot be explain'd. explain'd. Other mysterious and inexplicable Doctrines, the evangelical Revelation acquaints us with.

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how confidently foever fome are pleafed to affert it. The Conclusion is drawn from the Knowledge Men have of a finite created Being, and not from their Knowledge of the Being of God. The Argument in Fact, proceeds thus; this cannot be in finite created Beings, and therefore it is not possible in the infinite increated Being of God. We are fenfible that the reasoning is just, and the Conclufion certain, with respect to finite intelligent Agents; but provided this is a Mistake, it can never be proved an Absurdity, without such an Acquaintance with the Nature of the divine Being, as no Man can, with any Degree of Modesty pretend to have. It is not possible for any to invent an Absurdity, but it may be discover'd to be an Absurdity; even with relation to this mysterious Doctrine of the Trinity. The Reader may please to observe to this Purpose, two Things expressed by Wolzogenius, a Socinian Writer, relating to this Doctrine, which are evidently abfurd. 1. What if any should imagine with himself, and say, that in God is one Person only and three Essences, how will be be refuted (P). I answer thus: Either these three Essences, are intelligent and voluntary Agents, or they are not. If they are, then they must be three Persons; for we understand by a Person, a free intelligent Agent; and therefore to fay, that there are three such

<sup>(</sup>P) Quod si quis sibi aliter Rem imaginetur, & dicat, in Deo esse unam tantum Personam, & tres Essentias? Quomodo ille resutabitur?

in God, and but one fuch, is to affirm a manifest Contradiction: If they are not intelligent and voluntary Agents, then they cannot be one Person; or one free and understanding Agent. 2. Or if he should say, that in God are three Persons, yet these taken together are one Person only, how can be be refuted (4)? The Answer is most easily: For he that shall affirm, that there are three intelligent Agents in God, and but one intelligent Agent in the Deity, will affert a most palpable Contradiction. God cannot be three in the same Sense, wherein he is one; and he cannot be one in the same These are direct Sense in which he is three. Abfurdities, which this learned Man supposes some one to affert, in order to expose the sacred Doctrine of the Trinity to Contempt; but they fail of answering his End; and are a Proof, that any abfurd Imaginations relating to that Doctrine, may be foon discerned, and be eafily diffinguished from the mysterious and incomprehenfible Nature of it.

It is not difficult for Men to invent Absurdities; but it is impossible for any Man to devise a Mystery. And, therefore, since the Doctrine of the Trinity, cannot be proved to be an Absurdity, it ought to be allowed, that it is a Mystery, or an incomprehensible Truth, which the Understanding of Man could never

have devised.

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<sup>(9)</sup> Vel si dicat, etsi in Deo sint tres Personæ, illas tamen simul sumtas esse tantum unam Personam? Instructio ad utilem Lectionem Librorum. Nev. Test. cap. 6.

2. The Incarnation of Christ, or his Asfumption of the human Nature into Union with himself, is an evangelical Mystery. Great is the Mystery of Godliness, God was manifest in the Flesh ('). The Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us (s). The Son of God by this Act became what he was not before; still remaining what he was. And the Acts and Sufferings of the human Nature, in Obedience to the Will of the Father, in order to the Salvation of Sinners, are to be confider'd, as the Acts and Sufferings of his divine Person, not fubjectively, but relatively; as the human Nature is become one with himself. Hence, his Righteousness is called the Righteousness of God: And his Blood, the Blood of God. 'Tis from this refults the infinite Merit of his Obedience and Death.

3. The Doctrine of Propitiation by the Death of Christ is a Mystery. Neither the Wisdom of Men, nor the Wisdom of Angels, could have fixed on this Method of expiating Guilt, of satisfying the Law, and Justice of God. Nor can any finite Mind comprehend the Riches of God's Grace, which are displayed in this admirable Scheme, or form adequate Ideas of the Wisdom of this surprizing Contrivance, nor fully conceive of the amazing Shine of the Glory of divine Holines, Purity and Justice, which there is in this astonishing Transaction. This is the Wisdom of God in a Mystery,

<sup>(</sup>r) 1 Tim. iii. 16.

Mystery, bis bidden Wisdom, which he ordained

before the World to our Glory (1).

4. The Justification of Sinners, by the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, is a Mystery. How Man, that is a guilty Creature, could be just with God, no created Understanding was able to determine. Infinite Wisdom alone, could provide for the Acceptance of Criminals with God, in Consistence with the Honour and Authority of the Law, and the Support of the Rights of divine Justice. And the Riches of Grace that are discovered, in our being made righteous, by the Obedience of Christ, are beyond Expression,

yea even Conception.

5. Regeneration is a Mystery. The Truth of the Thing we know; but the Manner of it, we are no more able to describe, than we can particularly tell how Wind is produced, and what becomes of it, when it subsides. The Wind bloweth, where it lifteth; and thou bearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell from whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit ("). short, the Christian Religion is a Mystery; or all the Doctrines of Christianity are mysterious. They are Truths, which Reason could never have discovered, and they far exceed in Wisdom, Importance and Glory, the most enlarged Ideas of our narrow Minds. It is therefore false, that the greatest Part of Christianity is only a Reinforcement of the Religion of Nature.

<sup>(</sup>t) 1 Cor. ii. 7.

ture (\*), which Mr. Foster afferts it is. For Reason, or the Light of Nature, could never have discovered any of its peculiar and most important Doctrines, to the Comfort and Happiness of apostate Creatures, in Subordination to the Glory of God, which I hope, undeniably to prove in the second Chapter.

## CHAP. II.

## Of Reason.

what Things Reason, or the Light of Nature, is capable of discovering. That it cannot be a Guide to our Happiness. That it is to judge of the Truth of Revelation. That it is to be exercised upon Revelation, in order to learn those Principles, which that recommends to our religious Regard.

First, I am to shew what Things Reason, or the Light of Nature, is capable of discover-

ing.

1. It is able to discover with Certainty the Being of a God. If we take a Survey of the visible Creation, and consider the Order, Beauty, and regular Operations of Nature, we that

<sup>(</sup>x) Page 177.

shall find ourselves obliged to confess, that fome wife and powerful Being exists, who form'd the Universe. 'Tis impossible that a rational Enquirer into the Works of Creation, who confiders this Property of Matter, viz. that it is inert, or inclined to Rest, can fail of discovering, that Motion is given to the Earth, and other Planets, by fome superior Being. And he that duly confiders, the different Magnitudes, vast Distances, the mutual Attraction, and uniform regular Motions of the heavenly Bodies, must necessarily grant the Existence of God. It is contrary to all Reason to imagine, that the World produced itself; and it is as plainly contradictory to all good Sense, to conceive, that a fingle Particle of Matter, could ever exist of itself: And, consequently, the Opinion of the Formation of the World, by a casual Hit of innumerable Atoms, of different Natures, Sizes and Forms, and endued with various kinds of Motion, must certainly be false. For, not to infift upon the Absurdity of imagining, that so many thousands of Bodies, of various Shapes, and of very different Properties and Motions, should be formed by an indirected and fortuitous moving of Atoms, in immenfe Space; it is repugnant to Reason to think, that the smallest Particle of Matter could ever rife into being of itself. How then shall we be able to account for the Existence of those infinite Atoms, of which some Philofophers have very abfurdly thought, that the World was form'd, without granting the Ex-D 3

istence of some powerful Being, by whom

those Atoms were produced?

2. That the Creator is in Wisdom and Power and Goodness infinite. If Skill and Wisdom appear in his Works, and such Wisdom as raises our Admiration, he must, most certainly, in himself, be wise above our Comprehension. If there is an astonishing Display of Power in the Formation of all Things out of nothing, without all Scruple the Author of Nature is possessed of Power inconceivable. If there is, in Providence, an amazing Difcovery and Exercise of Beneficence, towards the various Creatures, which we fee exist, and particularly towards Man, in the fuitable Provision which is made, not only for the Support of his animal Life, but for his Entertainment, and the Delight of his various Senses, and the Pleasure of his Mind: Is it not truly rational to conceive, that God is in himself good, infinitely beyond our narrow Conceptions? He who will not allow, that there is exquisite Art, most conspicuous in the Creation, and that the Author of it, is not wife infinitely above his Understanding, must be a Fool. To fay, that there is not an infinitely wife Being, who endued Man, the chief of the lower Creation, with Wisdom and Sense, is to divest Mankind of all Reason, and rank them among the Brutes. If there is not a Being, who is the Fountain of Wisdom, there certainly is no fuch Thing, as Wisdom, Sense or Reason in the World. It must be mere Imagination, that

that Man is rational, or that he acts any Thing, in a wife and rational Manner. For as it is contrary to all Sense, to suppose that Man is an underived Being, so it is repugnant to Reason to conceive, that he is the Subject of the

lowest Degree of underived Wisdom.

3. The Light of Nature directs us to adore the Almighty Creator. It being evident, that God is infinitely wife, and powerful, and good, it appears most agreeable to Reason, that he should be honoured by the intelligent Part of his Creation, which he has rendered capable of difcerning those his Perfections, as they illustriously shine in all his Works. it is confonant to Reason to esteem a Man, who is only the Subject of Wisdom, which is infinitely below what refides in the Creator, it is doubtless fit and proper, that God, the Fountain of Light, Wisdom and Glory should

be adored, feared and obey'd.

4. Reason must, I think, convince us, that Mankind are not what they ought to be, neither in the Temper of their Minds, nor in their Conduct, and, confequently, that Man is not now what he once was, viz. when he was created of God. It would be an Instance of the greatest Stupidity, and a pregnant Proof, that we are abandoned to all Sense of Virtue, to entertain an Opinion, that the Bulk of Mankind, are as regular in their Behaviour, as Creatures possessed of a Principle of Reason to govern them, ought to be. And a Person, who perceives not, that his Passions, are disorderly,

exorbitant, D 4

exorbitant, and tumultuous .- That his Mind is unwary, inconstant, and strongly disposed to vain and finful Pleasures, must be strangely unacquainted with himfelf. We, therefore, are not fuch, as our Reason plainly dictates to us, it is fitting and proper we should be: But we are degenerate in our Taste, and imperfect in our Conduct, which ought to be uniform, perfectly, and without the least Interruption virtuous. If Men in general are not, if no Man in particular is, what he ought to be, furely it is reasonable to conclude, that Man is not now fuch as God made him. An intelligent Creature he indeed is; but corrupt and vicious, which he was not in his primitive State. That, I think, is as evident to Reason, as it is clear by Experience, that we are in any Degree tainted with moral Evil. We must either maintain, that Man is now in every Respect, what it is fit and proper he should be; or grant, that he once was, what he at present is not; unless we will be so irrational and impious against our Maker, as to affirm, that he form'd us with evil Inclinations, and unruly Paffions.

5. The Light of Nature clearly suggests, that moral Evil is contrary to God, and subjects his Creatures to his Displeasure. It is rational to think, that perfect Virtue is the Object of the Approbation of the infinitely pure Mind, and therefore, it must be reasonable to conclude, that God would always treat it with Marks of Esteem, if it was to be found among Men. Hence a certain and self-evident Conclusion

clusion may be drawn, viz. that perfect Virtue would be rewarded by God, if human Nature really poffeffed it. And, confequently, were Men what they ought to be, they could never entertain a gloomy Thought of being miserable hereafter; but they must be persuaded of the Fruition of complete Happiness for ever. It is the Imperfection of their Virtue, and a Consciousness of Vice, which occasion their dread of penal Evil, or the Loss of eternal Good. Indefective Obedience would never be attended with the least Hesitation, concerning an Interest in the Favour of God, and an everlasting Enjoyment of confummate Bliss. But, as Men are imperfect in Virtue, and are tainted with the Evil of Sin, they cannot but be fenfible, upon this Confideration, that they have forfeited a Claim to all divine Benefits. that unless Imperfection and Vice, can be approved of God, they must unavoidably be the Objects of his Disapprobation, and, confequently, miserable. Reason, therefore, if duly attended to, will lead us into a Sense of our Mifery, and discover to us, in some Degree, our present deplorable Circumstances. Thus far it may conduct us; but here it leaves us; and cannot be a Guide to our Happiness. By the Light of Nature, we discern, in some Meafure, our Wound and Disorder; but 'tis the Light of Revelation only, which acquaints us, with the Method of our Cure and Recovery. And yet, alas! in this momentous Affair, the imperfect Reason of Man, scorns to confess her Ignorance; Ignorance; she will usurp the Seat of Judgment, and dare to determine concerning Subjects, which are very far above her Sphere.

Secondly, I am to prove, that Reason cannot be a Guide to our Happiness. These Confiderations following, I think, amount to a full Demonstration and Proof of this Point. we consider Reason in its State of Perfection, it could not then, regularly form Conclusions, without fure and folid Principles to argue upon and infer from. This is fo evident, that I suppose its a Truth no Man will dispute, and therefore no Pains are necessary to prove it. 2. The Light of Nature, in its perfect State, had no other Principle to argue upon, or from which it might infer a perpetual Enjoyment of Happiness, than an unblemished and constant Practice of Holiness, and, consequently, now Man is imperfect, he can have no folid Principle, within the Discovery of his Reason, from which to argue, that he is able to attain Felicity, in this his corrupt and degenerate State. That Reason in her State of Perfection, could have no other Principle than the above-mentioned, from which a Conclusion might be inferred of lasting Felicity, is felfevident, if it is allowed that Man was subject to a perfect Law, in his primitive Condition, which furely no intelligent Person, can make the least Scruple of. Now if Reason, in its perfect State, had no other Principle to argue upon, with Relation to a perpetual Enjoyment of good, than that before expressed, it cannot possibly

possibly, in its depraved State, have any Principle at all, from which it may argue, with the least Degree of Probability, to a Recovery from deferved Ruin. The Voice of the Law, (which perfect Reason was in Subjection to) expresses nothing more than this: If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And, if thou doest not well; Sin lieth at the Door; i.e. Guilt and Punishment: And nothing farther, can Reason discover. 3. Much less is the Light of Nature capable of determining in what way, upon the Supposition of a divine Design to save Sinners, it will be most for the Honour of the Perfections of God, to deliver guilty Creatures from deferved Destruction. It is certainly irrational to think, that Reason was ever capable of making Discoveries beyond the Compass of the Law, which was its only Rule of Judgment and Practice; if that Law therefore, gives no Hint concerning the Welfare and Happiness of Transgressors, how is it possible, that Reason can, in its imperfect State, lay any Foundation, on which finful Men may build Hopes of Safety, or point out to us, by what Methods they may be recovered from Ruin? The Law knows nothing of any fuch Purpose, nor of the Way wherein, such a gracious Decree might be accomplished, and, consequently, Reason must be absolutely ignorant of both. Is not Reason then, intolerably imperious, to place herfelf in the Judgment-Seat, and pretend to decide in this Cause, since

The has no Principles to guide her, but what

she lays down to herself, and begs.

And yet, Men are so abominably infolent, as to grow furious, if their Decisions are called into Question, and corrected by an infinitely fuperior Judge, concerning Atonement for Sin, the Acceptance of finful Men, with a God of infinite and unspotted Purity, concerning the Way of depraved Man's attaining Holiness and consummate, endless Bliss. The Law, under which Reason originally was placed, delivers nothing at all, respecting either of these Particulars, nevertheless, such is the detestable Pride and Arrogance of Men, that they will needs be Judges of them all, and if their undirected Imaginations, are not embraced for Truth, they will rage, and pour Contempt on those, who make a Difficulty of allowing them to be fit Judges, in Things which they know are entirely out of their Reach.

By these Particulars, I am naturally led to take Notice of some false Principles and Mistakes, which Mr. Foster advances, and delivers on this Subject. 1. He afferts, That there is no Medium between employing our rational Faculties in examining and stating the Doctrines of Revelation, and being guided wholly by Sounds (a). 1. Reason should not presume to state, in what it cannot direct. It is absurd to think it may. 2. Either Revelation contains some Doctrines, which are beyond the Compass of Reason, or it does not. If it does, then

<sup>(1)</sup> Vol. IV. of Sermons, Page 88.

then Reason can give no Direction about the Nature of those Doctrines, of Course it is ridiculous to imagine, that Reason may state and determine concerning the Nature of those Doctrines. If Revelation delivers no Truths but fuch as the Light of Nature is capable of discovering, then, the Word of God is Law only; and hath nothing of Gospel in it. The alone Bufiness of Reason with Relation to evangelical Doctrines, is, to confider their Scriptural Evidence, Connection, Dependence, and Harmony. Reason is to judge of the Import of the Language of Scripture, wherein the important Doctrines of Atonement for Sin, Justification before God, and Regeneration are express'd; but should she presume to state and determine of the Nature of them, she might justly be censur'd, as extravagantly rude and infolent. Because these and all other evangelical Doctrines, are Truths which Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, neither have entered into the Heart of Man (b).

2. The Author adds, That it is Reason alone, that can set in a clear and distinct View, the Excellencies, peculiar Beauties, and Uses of Revelation (°). 1. It is freely allowed, that Reason is capable of discerning the Excellencies and Beauties of the Language of holy Scripture. 2. Reason is able to understand what is the proper Import of the Terms and Expressions, used in the sacred Pages; and, consequently, it is capable of discovering what

Truths

Truths are therein deliver'd. 3. But, Reafon of itself, or without divine Illumination, cannot difcern the Glory and Importance of evangelical Principles. If it may, then there is no need of the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation being given to Men, to help them to understand the Things of God. Then, Prayer to God for Illumination, that we may discern the Wonders of his Word, is vain and idle: Then spiritual Knowledge is not a Gift of divine Grace. 4. Yet, Revelation is not infignificant, nor as absolutely lost, with Respect to Mankind, as to Beings that are entirely irrational, which Mr. Foster afferts it is, if Reason cannot discern its peculiar Excellencies and Beauties. For, as Men, we understand the Sense of Revelation; and as Christians, we discover the spiritual Nature and singular Importance of its Principles, which are purely evangelical. Farther, 3. He observes, that nothing can justly be admitted as a Principle of revealed Religion, which is repugnant to Reafon (d). This is so evident a Truth, that I am persuaded, no Man will contradict it. 2. But Revelation contains Truths, which are above Reason, tho' not contrary to it. 3. When we fay, that there are fome Truths above Reafon, we mean either, (1.) That they are above the Comprehension of Reason: or, (2.) That Reason cannot discover those Truths. In the first Sense, many Truths of natural Religion are above Reason; this, I think, is clearly proved

<sup>(4)</sup> Page 90.

proved in the foregoing Chapter. In the fecond, as well as in the first Sense, evangelical Principles are above Reason. It could not difcover them, nor can it comprehend them. Mr. Foster makes a Supposition of what is false, on this Head, viz. that the Use of Reason, in Matters of Religion is denied. This is not true in Fact, and therefore, it is nothing better than grave Impertinence to reason upon it. Nor do we fet Faith and Reason at Variance, and make them oppose and clash with each other, which Mr. Foster suggests we do. For in believing evangelical Mysteries we contradict no Dictate of Reason or Principle of natural Religion, and we employ our Reason upon Revelation, in order to obtain an Apprehension of its Sense, and to discover the Connection and Dependence of its Truths.

4. The Gentleman says, we can scarce, indeed, suppose, that there are any Truths of the first Rank, and of universal Moment, with Respect to the Happiness of Mankind, but what Reason, if duly cultivated, might have · discovered (°).

1. To maintain that our Reason is capable of discovering every important Truth of natural Religion, in this State of Degeneracy and Impersection, is a very liberal Grant, and is what will not admit of clear and full Proof.

2. If the Gospel is of Importance to the Happiness of Mankind, we are absolutely unable to discover many momentous Truths; for no evangelical Principle, being reduci-

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 91, 92.

cible to the Law, which is the fole Rule of Judgment to Reason; that must, of Course, be wholly ignorant of every Gospel-Doctrine; and therefore, this is most notoriously false. Reason could never resolve, whether God will pardon Sin, justify a Sinner, and render guilty Creatures perfectly holy and eternally happy: Nor in what Way Criminals might be faved, confistent with the Honour of the Law, and the Glory of the divine Perfections. are fenfible, that the evangelical Revelation, is of little Weight with some Men, and that they discover no spiritual Excellency in the Doctrines of Atonement for Sin by the Death of Christ; of Justification by his Righteousness; of Sanctification by the gracious Influences of his Spirit: And we know, that if the Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are loft. These Truths are of the greatest Moment to the Happiness of finful Men, and are as far above the Discovery of Reason, as they exceed in Sublimity the short Extent of our narrow Minds,

5. Mr. Foster afferts, that Reason hath no Principles on which to proceed in forming a certain Conclusion, as to the Eternity of future Rewards (1).

1. I ask, whether Reason has any solid and evident Principles, from which it may draw a certain Conclusion, that Man is an immortal Creature? If it has not, then, I think, that no Truth of natural Religion can be established by it; and Men may say, let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, and 'tis un-

certain,

certain whether we shall exist after Death or not, why therefore should we concern ourfelves about what is doubtful, and cannot poffibly be made evident, by our utmost Force of reasoning? He who sees not, that this destroys the whole of natural Religion, must have lost his Reason. 2. Why is it that Man, who is a reasonable immortal Creature, is attended with any Scruple concerning the endless Enjoyment of Good? From whence must his Doubts of perpetual Happiness spring? Must they not arise from a Sense of the Impersection of his Virtue, and a Consciousness of his Vices? Certainly they can't proceed from any other Cause. 3. The Reason of Man, therefore, may discover to him, in some Measure, his Misery; it may convince him of his Obnoxiousness to future Punishment; but it can't furnish him with any Hope of future Rewards. 4. I cannot reconcile this with what Mr. Foster has above observed, viz. that we can scarce, indeed, suppose, that there is any Truth of the first Rank, and which is of universal Moment, with Respect to the Happiness of Mankind, but what Reason, if duly cultivated, might have discovered. Surely, it is a Truth of the first Rank, that Man is an immortal Creature. And if he for ever exists, he must exist either in a State of Happiness, or Misery. I am fure, right Reason would lead him strongly to conclude upon his endless Felicity, if he was what he ought to be; because it is irrational to think, that God will render any innocent Creature

Creature eternally miserable. And, therefore, Men's fluctuating in their Thoughts, with Respect to a future State, who enjoyed not divine Revelation, is a demonstrative Proof, of two Things: 1. That Man is not now the Subject of right Reason; i. e. perfect Reason, for right or perfect Reason could never be at an Uncertainty concerning the Immortality of human Nature. 2. That Reason cannot be our Guide to a happy Immortality. should it conduct us to a State, which it cannot prove, that it is, or will be? Is it possible that the Light of Nature should lead us to a State, which it cannot fo much as fee? Let us then bless God for the clear Light of Revelation; attend to it, and submit our Reason to that as our only Rule of Faith, in all Points of the greatest Moment to our present solid Peace, and future Welfare.

Thirdly, I freely grant, that Reason is to judge of the Truth of Revelation: And I apprehend, that it is no difficult Matter to determine concerning any Revelation, whether it is from God or no: Because Reason hath certain, and infallible, and easy Rules to guide her in forming a Judgment, in this weighty Affair. 1. We might be affured of the Falsehood of any pretended Revelation, which should maintain, that Men are not obliged to believe Mys-Whatever contradicts Reason cannot teries. be true; and, therefore, it can be no Revelation from God, who is the Fountain of all Truth. It is not more contrary to Reason, to affirm, that

that Bread is Flesh, than to affert, that Things incomprehensible are not to be credited. For, the plainest Principles and fundamental Truths of natural Religion, are above our Comprehension; and, consequently, it can be no Doctrine of a divine Revelation, that we are not bound to believe, what we don't understand, or cannot account for. Nay, that can be no heavenly Revelation, which doth not demand our Affent to Principles. which are far above the Reach of our Understanding. 2. It is reasonable to conclude, that a divine Revelation, will enjoyn the Fear and Worship of, and Obedience to God, in all Things. 3. Reason cannot but discern, that a heavenly Revelation, will recommend the Practice of Virtue, and condemn Vice; and urge the former upon us, by fuch Confiderations and Motives, as are of the greatest Weight: And that it certainly will propose fuch Arguments to diffuade us from vicious Courfes, as are most important and forcible. No Principle, that is not calculated to promote Holiness, and discourage the Practice of Sin, can come from God. Every Revelation from Heaven, must necessarily be, on the Side of Virtue, and against Vice. 4. We have evident Cause to object to the Truth of any Revelation, which should maintain, that human Nature never was in a better State, than it is at present.—That the Passions of Man were always as exorbitant, as now they be .-That his Reason was never more discerning, E 2 than

than now it is .- That Man, at no Time, was the Subject of better Habits, than now he is.— Each of these is contrary to Reason, and, therefore, neither of them can be true. Without any Scruple, we might condemn a Revelation, which should teach, that God can approve of Vice, or Imperfection; for that is contrary to the infinite Purity of his Confequently, 6. It must be no Revelation from God, which pretends, that guilty polluted Creatures can be approved of God, and receive Rewards from him, on Ac-For, if God cannot count of their Actions. approve of Vice, how is it possible, that he should approve of a Creature, which is the Subject of Vice, as fo confider'd? If God cannot delight in moral Imperfection, which is a felfevident Principle, neither can he take any Pleasure in him, who is the Subject of such Imperfection, as fo confidered. 7. It might be expected, that the Revelation of supernatural Truths, should be confirmed by superna-It is absolutely unnecessary to tural Works. work Miracles, in order to gain a Belief of what, as foon as it is clearly stated and explain'd, necessarily appproves itself to the Reason of Mankind. But, it is not unreasonable to expect the Confirmation of Principles, which are above the Light of Nature, by the Performance of miraculous Works: Because, that is the only external Demonstration we can have, in our present Situation, that God communicates to us the Knowledge of his Will,

Will, by any Creature. What Certainty can we have, that any Man is charged with a Meffage from Heaven to us, if there is no Appearance of extraordinary Power in, or with him? None at all, but what arises from the Nature of those Doctrines he delivers. And, therefore, tho' their Nature might be fuch, as he could not possibly invent them, yet Men might refuse to attend to his Instruction, for want of some external Proof of his divine Mission, in the Character of a Teacher. Yet, this is no Objection, to what I subjoin. The Nature of evangelical Doctrines is fuch, as Men could never have come at the Knowledge of them, without divine Guidance. That Men can invent Absurdities, or false Principles, which are repugnant to Reason, none may doubt; but they are not able to coin Mysteries. Nothing that is above the Light of Nature, can the Mind of Man arrive at the Knowledge of. And, therefore, if there are any Doctrines contained in the Bible, which are incomprehenfible, besides those that belong to natural Religion, they are an internal demonstrative Proof of its divine Original. In my humble Opinion, the mysterious Doctrines of the Christian Revelation, are as full and undeniable Evidence of its heavenly Authority, as any Thing can be: Because, it is not possible for Men to devise any absurd Principles, but the Absurdity of those Principles may be discovered by Reason; and as there are Doctrines in the Word of God, E 3 which which are either abfurd, or mysterious, and Reason cannot prove them absurd, it clearly follows, that they are proper Mysteries, or such Truths, as the Wisdom of Man could never invent; and, consequently, it ought to be allowed, that they are fuch, as no Man would ever have thought of, without supernatural Instruction. This is so full a Proof, that they come from God, that fuller Proof cannot be given of it. So far are the Mysteries of the evangelical Revelation, from being an Objection to it, that they are an invincible Argument in its Favour. If the Opposers of Gofpel-Mysteries, cannot plainly prove, that they are Absurdities, they ought to allow, that they are incomprehenfible Truths, not discoverable by Reason; and, consequently, that the Men, who first discovered them, must have been divinely inspir'd. This Reasoning seems to me to be clear, easy, and infallible, and its Force really unanswerable.

Fourthly, Reason is to judge of the Sense of Revelation: And it is capable of understanding what that expresses; otherwise, no Assent to its Truths could reasonably be expected from Men. 1. It is to consider the Import of the Language of Scripture, which is plain and intelligible. It is to observe the grammatical Order and Construction of the Sentences, wherein God hath declared his holy Will to us, without offering the least Violence to them. 2. The Business of Reason is, to compare spiritual Things with spiritual, or

one Part of divine Revelation with other Parts of it, upon every Subject, in order to discover the Harmony of its feveral Parts, and the Agreement of its Doctrines throughout the whole. A Revelation from God cannot contain opposite Principles. For Truth is certainly one, and uniform, and eternally confiftent. 3. Reason is to infer Conclusions from Premifes, which Revelation delivers. And this may be done with Certainty, provided, we proceed carefully, in confidering the true Sense of the Propositions, wherein some Truths are contained, from which other Truths are evidently deducible. For Instance, we often read that God is one; and we cannot but observe, that Christ is stiled God, and hath divine Perfections, and divine Works ascribed to him; and that the Holy Spirit is so called, and hath fuch Attributions given to him, as well as the Father. The just and necessary Consequence is, that according to Scripture, God is one, and also three. We are sure he cannot be one, and three in the same Sense, for that is a manifest Contradiction, he therefore, must be one effentially, and three personally. 4. As there are fome Subjects, which Reason is able to understand the true Nature of, and figurative Expressions are used about those Subjects, that will guide us in the Interpretation of fuch improper Modes of Speech. We certainly know, that God is a Spirit, and is not composed of Parts, and that he is not the Subject of any Paffion; when therefore, we find Eyes and Hands, E 4

Hands, &c. ascribed to him in his Word, we necessarily understand those Attributions in an improper Sense: So likewise, when Anger and Repentance are attributed to God, we rationally understand them in an analogical Sense. And the same Rule of Interpretation is to be obferved, when Christ is faid to be a Vine, a Door, and the Morning-Star, &c. This Rule ought also to take Place, when Christ says of the Sacramental Bread, this is my Body. His Language is as plainly improper, as it is, when he fays, this Cup is the New Testament, in my Blood. 5. But it is not allowable to explain away the proper Import of Scriptural Terms, Phrases, and Expressions, on Subjects, whereof Reason cannot be a Judge, as to their Truth and Nature without Revelation. This is the fatal Mistake of Socinian Writers, on almost all the peculiar Doctrines of Revelation. They appoint Reason to be Judge in such Articles, as come not within the Compass of natural Religion; but are peculiar to reveal'd, viz. The real Distinction, and proper Deity, and Unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Doctrine of Satisfaction by Christ's Death. Of Justification by his Obedience: And of the Sanctification of finful Men by the divine In-Because what is said on these Subfluence. jects, feems not reasonable to them, they take the Liberty to explain away the proper Sense of the Language of Scripture on these Points of Doctrine, not confidering, that neither of these Principles, is a Branch of natural Religion;

They, therefore, set up Reason, as a Judge, in Matters above its Sphere, and determine without Rules or Principles to proceed by, concerning the Nature of these Heads of Doctrine, which is irrational. Reason hath a Right to judge in all Truths, which are discoverable without the Help of Revelation; but it has no Business to sit as Judge, on Principles, that it could know nothing at all of, without the Bible. In so doing, Reason is no better than a rude, audacious Usurper of the Judgment-Seat: And none of its Decisions, on these Truths of pure Revelation deserve the least Regard.

## CHAP. III,

## Of Miracles.

R. Foster entertains an Imagination, that in order to the Production of miraculous Effects, the Exertion of divine Power is not necessary, and esteems this so clear a Point, that it will not admit of Dispute.

I. It cannot, I think, says he, be disputed, that superior created Beings, may be capable of performing performing real Miracles, - that they may enable a Man to do what is above the ordinary Powers of human Nature (2). I beg leave to ask, why this may not be disputed? Have we fuch plain and evident Proof of the Truth of this Supposition, that it is unreasonable to doubt of it? If so, it must be either, 1. Because, it is demonstrable, that they are capable of conveying to Men, from their own superior Abilities, greater Power than God has furnished human Nature with. Or, 2. It must be by an Act of their Will, that the supposed miraculous Effects are produced. the former, we have no Evidence; at least, none at all, that I can discern: And, with Respect to the latter, I am persuaded, that it is absolutely incapable of Proof. It seems clear to me, that Spirits good or evil, have naturally, no Power of acting upon Bodies; and if they have not, it is impossible, that they should ever obstruct, or cause Nature to exceed in its Operations, those Limits which the great Creator hath fix'd and appointed to it.

II. As we know not what Degrees of Power fuch superior Beings are possessed of, nor, consequently, the utmost they are capable of performing, we can have no certain, nor even probable Rule, in most Cases at least, whereby to distinguish what Operations, are properly divine, and what are not (b). Prodigious! This is a

( Ibid.

<sup>(1)</sup> Answer to Christianity as old as the Creation, Edit. 3. pag. 50.

most extravagant Supposition of the Extent of Power possessed by invisible Beings! Men may imagine, if they please, that all Nature is subject to the Will, and Controul of Spirits; but they will never be able to give the least Proof of it. What! Can invisible Beings change the Nature of Bodies? Are they able to turn Water into Blood? Dust into Lice? Have they Power to make a folid of a fluid Body? Can they stop the Course of the Sun or Earth? Is it possible for them to cause the one or the other, which is supposed to move, to go many Degrees backward? Can Spirits re-kindle the vital Flame, when it is extinguished in a Man, and re-unite a departed Soul, with the Body it has left? Are they able to give Sight to the Blind, by the Use of Clay? If Mr. Foster can persuade himself, that they are capable of performing fuch miraculous Work, he may, I think, believe any Thing, he shall please to imagine, is true. I dare venture to fay, that he will never be able to prove, that the least Portion of Matter, will move at the Pleasure of an Angel, more than by an Act of the human Will: How then, will he prove, that they can perform such Operations, as cannot be distinguished from divine? This I cannot but account an enthusiastic Whim of the Author's; repugnant to Reason or Philosophy, and contradictory to Revelation; which affures us, that God alone doth Wonders.

III. He adds, That as invisible Beings, superior in Power to Mankind, may perform real Miracles, Miracles, and fuch as are of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind, we are not sure that God may not, for wife Reasons, permit this (c). 1. He has not proved, that Spirits have a natural Power to act upon Matter at all. Much less has he demonstrated, that they are naturally capable of making fuch Changes in the Nature of Bodies, that Omnipotence itfelf, cannot make greater; which they must be able to do, if they can perform real Miracles of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind. 3. It is unreasonable to suppose, that God will ever permit of Miracles being wrought to confirm Error; if they have the least Weight, or if they in the lowest Degree tend to perfuade Men of the Truth, of what they are done in Confirmation of: That is contrary to his Perfections. 4. I challenge Mr. Foster to prove, that real Miracles, (not to fay of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind) were at any Time performed, in Favour of false Principles.

If it is ever prov'd at all, that invisible Beings have a Power of working real Miracles, it must be, either from Reason or Revelation. It cannot, I apprehend, be proved from Reason. I. Because, if they are pure Spirits, they cannot act upon Matter, but after the Manner of immaterial Beings, viz. by Volition only. Reason plainly teaches us, that the smallest Body is not subject to the Will of the human Mind, besides that Portion of Matter to which

And if a Member of the human it is united. Body, thro' any Caufe, becomes withered, that Member is no longer subject to the Will of the Soul, notwithstanding its Union with the Body is still continued. And, therefore, it feems reasonable to conclude, that the Will of a finite rational Being, can have no Influence upon Matter, but by a divine Constitution; and, that that Matter must be suitably disposed and in Union with a thinking Power, before it can be, at all, under the Direction of it. If this is true, which, I think, cannot reasonably be questioned, then immaterial Beings, have not the least Degree of natural Power, to work Wonders in the material World. 2. It does not feem likely, that God would endue invisible Beings with a Power, which they are very rarely permitted to exert. For, to what Purpose are they furnished with Powers, which they are almost always, except in some extraordinary Cases, prevented exercifing? And must it not give Uneasiness to those powerful Creatures, to be almost perpetually under Restraints, and hindered from doing what they know themselves able to perform? 3. The vast Number of those Beings renders this Supposition the more unlikely to be true. If there are more in Number of these Beings, than Miracles have been wrought, then some of them, have never exerted a Power natural to them, which I think is unreasonable to suppose. I can't be persuaded, that Miracles, and such as are of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind, we are not sure that God may not, for wife Reasons, permit this (c). 1. He has not proved, that Spirits have a natural Power to act upon Matter at all. Much less has he demonstrated, that they are naturally capable of making fuch Changes in the Nature of Bodies, that Omnipotence itfelf, cannot make greater; which they must be able to do, if they can perform real Miracles of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind. 3. It is unreasonable to suppose, that God will ever permit of Miracles being wrought to confirm Error; if they have the least Weight, or if they in the lowest Degree tend to perfuade Men of the Truth, of what they are done in Confirmation of: That is contrary to his Perfections. 4. I challenge Mr. Foster to prove, that real Miracles, (not to fay of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind) were at any Time performed, in Favour of false Principles.

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it is united. And if a Member of the human Body, thro' any Caufe, becomes withered, that Member is no longer subject to the Will of the Soul, notwithstanding its Union with the Body is still continued. And, therefore, it feems reasonable to conclude, that the Will of a finite rational Being, can have no Influence upon Matter, but by a divine Constitution; and, that that Matter must be suitably disposed and in Union with a thinking Power, before it can be, at all, under the Direction of it. If this is true, which, I think, cannot reasonably be questioned, then immaterial Beings, have not the least Degree of natural Power, to work Wonders in the material World. 2. It does not feem likely, that God would endue invisible Beings with a Power, which they are very rarely permitted to exert. For, to what Purpose are they furnished with Powers, which they are almost always, except in some extraordinary Cases, prevented exercifing? And must it not give Uneafiness to those powerful Creatures, to be almost perpetually under Restraints, and hindered from doing what they know themselves able to perform? 3. The vast Number of those Beings renders this Supposition the more unlikely to be true. If there are more in Number of these Beings, than Miracles have been wrought, then some of them, have never exerted a Power natural to them, which I think is unreasonable to suppose. I can't be persuaded, that the all-wise Creator would ever furnish any Creature, with a Power never to be exerted.

Nothing can be collected from Scripture to support this Opinion. 1. Good Spirits were used by God as moral Instruments, in effecting of his Will in many Instances of a miraculous Kind, both in a Way of Judgment on his Enemies; and in a Way of Mercy, in Favour of his People: But neither of these proves, that those miraculous Works were done by their Power and Agency; or, that they were the Subjects of that Power, whereby those Wonders were performed, which is the Point to be demonstrated. 2. Evil Spirits were used as fuch Inftruments, in miraculous Works, fometimes, for the Tryal of the Faith and Patience of God's People: So Satan was in the Case of Job. But we have no Reason to think from that Instance, that the Devil is the Subject of a sufficient Power to enable him to raise Winds, to send forth Lightning, or to strike the Bodies of Men with Diseases. For Job's fore Affliction was the Hand of God upon bim, tho' at the Will of Satan, chap. ii. 3-5. The Scripture informs us of various Miracles being wrought by Spirits, and by Men, under the legal, as well as the evangelical Dispensation; but it no where tells us, that Spirits any more than Men, are the Subjects of a Power fufficient to produce such extraordinary Effects, Angels are superior to Men, in Power and Might, and they excel in Strength; but it is wholly of the intellectual Kind, which will

never enable them to act upon, move, support, or change the Nature of Bodies. The weakest Man upon Earth, is able to bear up and carry some Portion of Matter; but a Legion of Angels have not a natural Power to support a finking Atom, nor to move the smallest Body at Rest. The Breath of a Man for ought appears from Reason or Revelation, will have a greater Influence on Matter, than the united Volitions of an Army of Angels. How wild and extaavagant an Imagination is it therefore, to conceit, as Mr. Foster does, that invisible Beings have a natural Power to work Miracles, of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind. He will as foon prove, that Spirits may be crushed to Pieces by a Weight of Matter, as that the Volition of any finite Spirit, can so much as stir the smallest Body at Rest, or retard, or accelerate its Motion, when it is once moved.

Some may, perhaps, object to the Doctrine, I endeavour to maintain, that God alone doth Wonders, or that no Power short of infinite, can work real Miracles, and urge, 1. That the Magicians of Egypt changed their Rods into Serpents: And turned Water into Blood: And brought up Frogs upon the Land. I answer, 1. Moses and Aaron did not perform these, or such like Miracles, by their own Power. 2. Neither did the Magicians work those Wonders by their own Power; God himself was the Author of them. They defired the Production of such Effects, and divine

vine Power produced them. 3. They are faid to do as Moses and Aaron did, in the Plague of Lice, altho' the Effect did not follow, Exod. viii. 18. And, therefore, when it is faid, in the former Instances, that they did them by their Inchantments, it is not to be concluded, that they produced those Effects, but that God wrought them. might be the Pleasure of God so to do, to try the Faith of Moses, to harden Pharoah's Heart, and to bring the greater Confusion upon the Magicians, when he ceased to work Wonders, or to produce miraculous Effects at their Defire, that such Effects might be produced. 2. It is supposed that false Prophets may foretell Signs, &c. and that they may come to pass, Deut. xiii. 1: Answ. The Apostle makes a Supposition of an Angel from Heaven, preaching another Gospel, than what he delivered; but it is not inferrible from that Supposition, that any good Angel can, hath done, or ever will Nor is it to be inferr'd from the former so do. Supposition, that a false Prophet can, hath, or ever will foretell Signs, and work Miracles. The latter, is a strong Way of cautioning against Error, and the former against Idolatry. 3. Our Saviour tells us, that false Christs, and false Prophets, shall shew great Signs and Wonders. Anfav. Lying Wonders are to be understood, not real Miracles, as in 2 Theff. ii. 11.

Stronger Attestation of the Truth of any Doctrine, cannot be given, than the working of Miracles in Confirmation of it, is. If the Voice

Voice of God was heard from Heaven, expreffing fome particular Truths; that would not afford us brighter, and fuller Evidence in Favour of those Truths, than the Exertion of his Power, in the Production of miraculous Effects, affords in Favour thereof. If it is conceived, that invisible Beings have an innate Ability to work Wonders, it may as reasonably be thought, that they are capable of forming an articulate Voice, and can convey Sounds to our Ears; and, therefore, we could not be more certain of the Truth, of what should be express'd to us, in that unusual and extraordinary Manner, than we may be of the Truth of what receives Confirmation by fupernatural Works. And fince there is no better external Means devisable, whereby divine Truths may be confirmed, than miraculous Operations; it is a Reflection on the Wisdom and Goodness of God, to imagine, that he will permit of Errors receiving that Advantage. If Error may vye with Truth in this Matter: If the Doctrine of Devils may receive the same honourable Testimony, as divine Truths; then Truth, however important, can have no external superior Advantage in its Favour, beyond what may attend the vilest and most destructive Principles; which it is not reasonable to suppose. If this may be true, then Christ, and his Apostles, argued not in a certainly conclusive Manner, the Truth of the Doctrines they delivered, from those extraordinary Works, which they wrought in Confirmation of them: Nor were the Jews so culpable, as they every where represent them, for rejecting Proofs of their divine Mission, which are not of an incontestable and infallible Nature, which Miracles cannot be, if the Devil himself, is able to perform such, as are of the

most astonishing and stupendous Kind.

Farther, Christ who is the Head and Lord of all created Beings; as Man was not the Subject of that Power, by which the Miracles he wrought, were effected: For the Father did the Works. The human Will of our Saviour had not fuch mighty Efficacy; all his miraculous Operations, were Effects of his divine Will. It was his Spirit, or divine Nature, that quickned, his Flesh, or his human Nature profited nothing. Now if Christ, as Man, was not the Subject of that Power, whereby the Miracles he performed, were produc'd; can it be reasonably supposed, that invisible Beings, who are in Subjection to him, are possessed of a sufficient Power to perform Operations, full as extraordinary as those our bleffed Redeemer did, in Order to prove his divine Mission? The Man, who can persuade himself of the Truth of this, must, I think, have lost his Senses; and nothing can be so abfurd, but fuch a Person may believe it is true. I am free to tell Mr. Foster, and the whole World, that I dare promife to believe the Truth of any Doctrines, unheard, which should receive fuch Confirmation, as Christ gave of the Reality of his divine Mission, and, confequently,

consequently, of the Truth of those Doctrines he taught: Because, notwithstanding, all that this Gentleman has said, concerning the Power of invisible Beings, to work Miracles of the most astonishing and stupendous Kind, I know, as Nicodemus saith, that sous none, neither Man, nor Angel, can do the Works Christ did, except God be with him. And, I am sure, that no Man will, or can deceive me, who acts by divine Authority, and speaks under divine Direction.

## CHAP. IV.

Rules of interpreting the Holy Scriptures.

of God: What is abfurd or repugnant to Reason cannot be true.

Reason is a Ray of Light from God, the Source of all intellectual Light and Knowledge; and, therefore, whatever Discoveries Reason makes, they must be just and true. It cannot be the Design of Revelation, to extinguish the Light of Nature: It requires us not to be inattentive to the Discates of our Reason; much less, does it oblige us to deny any rational Principles, and to believe what we certainly know must necessarily

rily be false. Divine Faith is a farther Light than Reason; but it is not at all contrary to it.

II. We ought to be fure, that those Subjects whereof we fet ourselves to judge by Reafon, are within its Sphere. This is absolutely necessary; for if we pretend to reason about Doctrines, which are out of the Compass of the Light of Nature, except as we are affisted by Revelation, we shall argue without Rules; and, confequently, our Conclusions must be, at least, uncertain; if not false, and inconsistent with the Nature of those sublime Subjects we take into our Confideration. fon clearly discerns, that there is but one God; but it can never prove, that the personal Distinction of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and their Equality is inconfistent with their effential Unity; which Mr. Foster suggests it can (a): And afferts, that this Doctrine is evidently repugnant to Reason. But all the Reafon he is Master of will never prove it so. A Plurality of Gods is repugnant to Reason; but the Doctrine of the Trinity infers not a Plurality of Gods, but of Persons, or of free and understanding Agents, in the one undivided Being of God.

III. Bring no Principle to Revelation, but what is evident to Reason. Such Principles there doubtless are: As, that there is one God.—That he is an infinitely wise, and powerful,

<sup>(2)</sup> Rules for the profitable reading the Holy Scriptures, Vol. I. of Sermons, pag. 255, 256.

powerful, and good Being.—That moral Imperfection and Sin are displeasing to him.—That Man is not what he ought to be, and, consequently, that he is not now, such as God made him. These are self-evident Principles: And it might reasonably be expected to meet with these Principles, in a Revelation granted to Men, in Case of such a Favour being vouch-sav'd to them.

IV. It is reasonable wholly to submit our Reason, to the Instruction of the Word of God, in all Articles, which that, independent of Revelation, could never discover. The Light of Nature, is a fafe and fure Guide, with Respect to the Certainty of some Truths: But there are others of the greatest Moment, which are absolutely out of its Reach, viz. How Sin might be attoned for.——How a guilty Creature, which has lost an Interest in divine Approbation, may be justified in the Sight of God.——How depraved Man may become holy and happy. These are Things of the utmost Consequence. Of each of these, Reason is entirely ignorant; and it must so be. because they come not within the Compass of natural Religion. Reason cannot doubt of the Felicity of Innocents; but it can never resolve whether Criminals shall be happy, or in what Way it will become the Perfections of God, to recover them from deserved Ruin. evident; for the Light of Nature cannot make Discoveries of Truths, that are not contained in that Law, which it was under in its State of F 3 Perfection; Perfection; it is abfurd to suppose that it is capable of making fuch Discoveries. fince none of these Things are included in, or pointed out, by the Law, Reason must necesfarily be totally unacquainted with either of them. Hence, it follows, that the only proper Business of Reason, in these Points, is to confult what Revelation delivers on those Heads, and entirely to give up itself to the Instruction of the Word of God, and readily, and thankfully embrace, what is expressed in the holy Scriptures, relating to those Subjects, without the least Hesitation or Dispute. It is a base Corruption of natural Religion, to maintain, as Mr. Foster does, that it is an easy Thing for Sinners to appeale God, and a difficult Matter for them to affront, i. e. offend him (b). It is a fundamental Principle of the Religion of Nature, that constant Obedience entitles to Life, and that moral Imperfection subjects to Misery and Death. 'Tis no rational Principle, that Men may transgress the Law of their Maker, with Impunity, or fail in the Practice of their Duty, without giving Offence to the Deity. And it is false, that we affert that God has configned over any of his Creatures to irremediable and endless Misery, without any Regard to their Actions, or Qualifications, which this Gentleman, has been pleafed to affirm, we do (c). In this, I am fure, he had no Regard to Modesty or Truth.

V. Put no Force upon the Language of Scripture; nor endeavour to give evalive Explications of it, on fuch Subjects, as are not Branches of natural Religion, under a Pretence of framing rational Sentiments concerning them. That is not to act the Part of modest Learners, in Points of Doctrine, wherein we certainly ought; but the Part of those, who need no Instruction from Heaven, relating to Principles that are of the greatest Importance, and which we could never have acquired the least Knowledge of, without a supernatural Revelation. Reason ought not to dictate or object, on the peculiar Doctrines of Christianity, because it can know nothing about them, but by the Writings of the old and new Testament; and, consequently, it ought to be content only to learn, and confess its Ignorance.

VI. As Revelation inculcates the Principles of natural Religion, and also other Principles, it will, I apprehend, conduce very much to our right Understanding of the Scriptures, carefully to distinguish those Principles. In the former, Reason may, I think, be allowed to judge concerning them: But as to the latter, its only proper Business, is to explain the Sense of the Words, Expressions, and Phrases of the facred Pages; for it ought to embrace that, as the true Meaning of the Language of Scripture, on the latter Subjects, which it naturally imports. Either Men, by the Light of Nature, independent of Revela-

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tion, may acquire the Knowledge of all the Doctrines delivered in the Bible, or they cannot: If they cannot, then it is demonstrable, that Reason hath no other Rule of interpreting the Language of Holy Writ, on those Subjects, than this, which ought ever to be attended to, viz. the obvious and natural Sense it conveys. If this Rule had been observed, as it is highly reasonable it should punctually be, the Church of God, would have been free from numerous Heresies, with which, in

almost all Ages, she has been pester'd.

VII. Let the Expressions of Scripture be confidered in their Connection, and the real Defign of the divine Writers, be carefully obferved. If they discourse of temporal Punishment, do not apply what they fay on that Subject, to the eternal Condition of Men. Error, the Arminians are guilty of in difcourfing on the xviiith Chapter of Ezekiel: And if the holy Pen-men treat of the eternal State of Mankind, do not interpret what they fay on that Point, of the external Condition of Bodies and Nations of Men. This is a notorious Mistake, which the Arminians also fall into, in the Explanation, or rather Perversion of the 9th Chap. of the Epistle to the Romans. By the former, they endeavour to establish their Opinion, that it is the Will of God, that all Men should be eternally faved; whereas, the eternal Salvation of none is treated of in that Chapter; and therefore, all they urge from it, in Favour of their Sentiments, is impertinent.

pertinent, and foreign to the Scope of the divine Writer. And by the latter, they would prove, that it is the Pleasure of God, to afford to some Bodies of Men greater external Privileges, than to other Nations. Whereas, it is the future State of Men, that is there discoursed of; and, consequently, all their Reasoning upon that

Place is forced and unnatural.

VIII. Allow every Word its proper Sense, and do not attempt to explain away the true Meaning of a Scriptural Term, tho' you may find it used, in a lower and different Sense, fometimes. As the Anti-trinitarians do the Term of God, when it is apply'd to Christ. Do not pervert the facred Scripture in those Places, where the important Doctrine of Christ's Satisfaction is treated of; by criticising on Prepositions; and think that that momentous Truth is fufficiently refuted, if you can shew, that Hebrew Particles, and Greek Prepositions, by which the full Sense of that Doctrine is expressed, are used to different Purpofes, in some Instances, and on other Subjects. This Sort of Criticism the Socinians deal much in: They run thro' the Scripture, and if they can but find, that those Particles and Prepositions are used in a different Sense on other Subjects, and in other Places, they will rashly infift upon it, that fuch a Meaning, those Particles and Prepositions cannot have, when used on that Subject. This is bold and impertinent trifling with the Word of God, whatever Shew of Learning there is in it. This Part

Part Mr. Foster acts, in Relation to the Term eternal, when it is applied by the Apostle Jude to the Punishment inflicted on the Inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrab; he restrains it to temporal Punishment (d). Because, as I suppose, he can dare to charge God with Cruelty, if he should punish Criminals without End.

IX. Compare the feveral Parts of facred Writ together. By this means, you may obtain the most convincing Evidence of particular divine Truths, and of the Truth of Revelation in general. But see well to it, when you compare one Part of the Scripture with another, that the Holy Writers, treat of the same Subjects, and that they confider them in the fame View. If you fail in this, you will unavoidably make them contradict one another, and run yourself into dangerous Mistakes. This is a fatal Error, into which, the Socinians and Arminians fall, in comparing what the Apostle Paul and the Apostle James deliver, concerning Justification. The Apostle Paul treats of the Matter of our Acceptance with God, and most clearly and fully proves, that not our own Works, but that the Obedience of Christ is the fole Foundation of our Justification, in the Sight of God. And the Apostle James shews us what Faith it is, which embraces that great Benefit, and what are the genuine Effects of that Faith. The evident Defign of the former is to establish the Doctrine of Justification by Faith, without our personal Works: And the Intention

<sup>(</sup>d) Page 262.

Intention of the latter is, to shew that good Works certainly attend and flow from that Faith, which apprehends the justifying Righteousness of Christ, and that no Man hath sufficient Ground to conclude upon his Justification, who is not the Subject of such a Faith.

## CHAP. V.

Of Heresy. Methods to be taken with Heretics. Calvin's Conduct towards Servetus considered.

HE Term Herefy, is sometimes used in an indifferent Sense, and intends no more than a certain Sect. So it is in these Words: For as concerning the Aipereus tauthe, this Herefy, or Sect, we know that every where it is spoken against (a). It designs evangelical Doctrines, and the Profession of them. No evil Meaning attends the Use of the Word, when the Apostle Paul says of himself, that after the most straitest Sect, or Herefy, of the Jewish Religion, he lived a Pharise (b). But pernicious Principles, and such as are of dangerous Consequence, must be meant by Herefy, in this Text: Who privily shall bring in damnable Heresses, even denying the

<sup>(</sup>a) Acts xxviii. 28.

<sup>(</sup>b) Ibid, xxvi. 5.

the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift Destruction (°). It is an Enquiry of great Importance, what Notions are to be accounted heretical: Every Error in Opinion, relating to religious Subjects, is not

Herefy.

I. I shall endeavour to shew, what Heresy is; or what Principles are heretical. In my Apprehension, any Opinion which dissolves the Obligation to Christian Obedience; which overthrows Christian Worship; which subverts the Foundation of Christian Faith and Hope; is heretical.

1. To deny, that the Law is a Rule of Conduct to Christians, is an heretical Principle. This is the Herefy of the Antinomians and Libertines. It certainly diffolves all Obligation to Duty, and gives a most licentious Liberty; a Liberty to perpetrate all Manner of Vice without Restraint. Some have been charged with holding this Principle, who utterly abhorr'd it. I confess, that a certain Writer hath delivered himself, as I think, a little inaccurately on this Subject; which may have occasioned some Persons to fall into a Mistake in this Point. He makes Condemnation effential to the Law; which it is not; for that belongs to it, as it is a Covenant, and not as it is a Law merely: And the Promise of Reward on Condition of our Obedience, belongs to it, as it is a Covenant, but not as it is a Law. This Author maintains, the Believers Obligation

<sup>(</sup>c) 2 Pet. ii. I.

Obligation to love God and his Neighbour, and to perform all those Duties which Love dictates; but not as enjoyned with a Threatning annexed, which is not effential to the Law, as a Law; but as it is a Covenant. The bare Command of God is a Law: His Command with a Promise of Reward, in Case of Obedience, and a Denunciation of Penalty, in Case of Disobedience, is more than a Law. Believers are not under the Law, confidered, as in the Form of a Covenant: Hence there is no Condemnation to them. But they are under it, confidered fimply, as it is a Law; and not as it promises Life on Condition of Obedience, and threatens Death for the Want of it. For these are proper and peculiar to it, as in the Form of a Covenant. Either, God will proceed towards Men in Judgment, according to the Defert of their personal Actions: If so, it must be granted, that his Law will include in it, a Threatning of Death for Sin; and a Promise of Life, on Condition of Obedience, if that Threatning and Promise are not expreffed. Or, he will proceed towards them, according to what Christ hath done and suffered for them: If fo, then his Precepts can have no Promise of Reward, nor Threatning of Punishment, annexed to them, on the Score of their Behaviour. A Law therefore, under which fuch Men are, who will be proceeded towards, in the former Manner, must contain a Curse, as well as a Promise of Favour; and its Nature is necessarily federal: But a Law, under under which the latter are, contains not a Curse, nor a Promise of Benefits; it hath nothing of the Nature of a Covenant in it. Yet, still, it is a Law, tho' not in the Form of a Covenant. This sufficiently answers, in my Opinion, what Mr. Lancaster advances on this Subject. In his Vindication of the Gospel, with the Establishment of the Law, chap. 16

and 17.

2. To affert, that Christ is a Creature only, is Herefy. His proper Deity receives such clear and full Proof from Scripture, according to the natural Sense of the Language, it uses to express his Divinity by; that fuller Proof of it is not necessary, nor need be defired. And the Doctrine of his proper Deity, is of the greatest Moment. That is the Foundation of the religious Honours we pay to him, and of the religious Confidence and Trust, we repose in him, as well as of the raifed Expectations we form from him. And, therefore, those who divest him of supreme Glory, as they act a most injurious Part against Christ, they also deprive us of the folid Ground of our Hope, as Creatures miserable and helpless; and if they entitle him to a Share in our religious Services, they teach us to worship the Creature, besides the Creator, to do Service to one, who by Nature is not God, which is condemned as Idolatry in the holy Scripture.

3. The Denial of his real and proper Satisfaction for Sin; is an heretical Principle. If he, by his Sufferings and Death, hath redeemed

us from the Law's Curfe, and fecured us from divine Vengeance, to which our Sins exposed us; then he made Reconciliation for Iniquity, or Peace by the Blood of his Cross, and is a proper Object of our Trust, as we are guilty Creatures, for the Remission of our Sins, and a Deliverance from that Wrath, which is to come; then God appears to be just in our Pardon and Salvation, upon the Foundation of his Atonement: But if he has not fo done, his Death, properly speaking, can have no causal Influence into our Forgiveness; his Sufferings are not a proper Ground of our Hope, nor is the Justice of God manifested, or exercifed in pardoning of our Crimes thro' him. This therefore, is a Herefy of a very pernicious Nature, and of dreadful Confequence.

4. To affirm, that Men are the Cause of their Regeneration, either in whole, or in part, is Herefy. If it is faid, that they are wholly the Cause, then the Efficacy of divine Grace, in that Work, is totally denied. And if it is in Part, ascribed to the Will and Endeavour of Man; or if it is afferted, that Men become regenerate, by their Will concurring with the Aids of a common Grace afforded to them; then it is not the Grace of God, which effects their Regeneration, and that makes them differ from others; but an Act of their own, and therefore, they have Cause to glory; for they really have fomewhat, as Christians, which, they did not receive from God, viz. a Will to be holy. Hence, I cannot but conclude,

clude, that this is an heretical Opinion, of a very injurious Nature to the Grace of God, and that it is calculated to maintain, an affu-

ming Apprehension of ourselves.

Persons, who embrace these heretical Opinions, frequently, attempt to introduce them, into the Church of God, in an artful and fly Manner. They bring them in privily, or under false Pretences, endeavour by little and little, to draw off the Minds of Christians, from the folid, and fubstantial, and pure Truths of the Gospel, in order to gain them over at length to their most erroneous Tenets. This is the Wisdom of the old Serpent, with which nothing of the Innocency of the Dove is tempered. Let this be the Practice ALONE of Truth, evangelical Truth, is fo fair and beautiful, that there is no Necessity of introducing her in the dark, or under a Veil. Herefy's monstrous Nature needs a covering. Its hideous Shape, if feen in open Light, would strangely terrify the innocent Sheep of Christ.

Mr. Foster observes three Things relating to this Subject. 1. That no mere Error of the Judgment can be Heresy (a). 1. If this Observation is true, then it is trisling to speak of heretical Principles, there can be no such. Let a Man's Temper, his Intention, his Views, and his Conduct be what they will; they have nothing to do with his Notions, they are neither better nor worse, whether he is a Person

of

<sup>(</sup>d) Vol. I. of Sermons, page 281.

of Integrity, or a Hypocrite and Deceiver. Truth is Truth, and Error must be Error, let the Persons, who embrace the one or the other, be what they may; religious or prophane, virtuous or vicious. 2. Then it is impossible to discover Heretics, without the Knowledge of Men's Hearts, or an Acquaintance with the secret Views, which influence them in their Conduct. 3. Then, in Fact, a Man may with Safety to himself, deny the most important Truths; provided, he seriously thinks, that he is right in the Denial of them, let him so imagine thro' any Cause whatever.

2. No bonest Man, fays he, can possibly be an Heretic (°). Answ. Can a dishonest Man embrace Truth? I suppose it will be allowed, that he may. Is the Nature of Truth the fame? Or is it changed, when held by a difhonest Man, and a Hypocrite? I imagine this will not be granted. I farther ask, if an honest Man, may not imbibe Error? Mr. Foster supposes he may; then, I desire to know, whether an Error retains its Nature, or continues to be Error, when it is embraced by an honest Man? If the Affirmative should be allowed, then, if any erroneous Opinions are Herefies, the honest Man, who holds those heretical Notions, must be an Heretic. But Mr. Foster understands by Heresy, Insincerity or Hypocrify; and, therefore, it is impossible, according to his Apprehension, that there should ever be any heretical Opinions. Truth

<sup>(</sup>c) Page 282.

can't be Herefy; neither is Error Herefy; as he thinks: Now if neither Truth, nor Error, is Herefy; there is not, there cannot be, any heretical Principles. What then can the infpired Writer mean, by damnable Herefies, which he declares, some Persons would privily

bring in?

3. The Gentleman adds, how can we certainly know, at least, in most Cases, whether a Man be an Heretic or not (')? I answer, how indeed? According to his Opinion, it is impossible, without a Revelation from Heaven. For, if the dishonest Man has but the Cunning to conceal his Hypocristy; if he, himself does not let us know, by some Means or other, that he acts against the Dictates of his Reason and Conscience, we shall never be able to discover him. And, therefore, we can have no Concern, either with Heresies or Heretics. Nay, we cannot so much as know, whether there is an Heretic in the World or not: Nor, that there are any Heresies.

II. The Apostle gives us very plain Directions, how to proceed towards Heretics. A Man that is an Heretic, after the first and second Admonition, reject. He is to be admonished twice; and if neither the first, nor the second Admonition, prevails with him, to give up his heretical Opinions, then he is to be rejected, or cut off, by a Christian Community, as an unsound and dangerous Member. And such a Proceedure against him, is just and righteous;

<sup>(</sup>f) Page 288.

righteous; because he is subverted; that is, he is turned aside from the proper and only Rule of Christian Faith; and he sinneth, in putting of forced and unnatural Interpretations, on the Word of God, in order to defend his Errors, and stifle the Evidence of the important Truths, which he denies: And he is felf-condemned (8); that is to fay, according to his own first Principle, as a Christian, he acts a finful Part. For, his first Principle, as a professed Christian, is, that the Scripture is the Rule of Faith; and that whatever Doctrines it contains are true, and ought to be believed. He acts directly contrary to this Principle, in holding of his heretical Notions, which is highly criminal. For Instance, when he reads that Christ is God; he will have it, that he is a Creature only, and not God. And when he finds it afferted, that nothing that is made, was made without Christ; in order to evade the Force of this clear Argument, in Favour of the proper Deity of our Saviour, he will except bimself, and infift upon it, that tho' he was concerned in the Creation of all Things besides himself, yet he was himself created; and, therefore, something that is made, was made without his Concurrence, viz. himself. Or, if this appears, to be offering too great Violence to facred Writ, then he will without any Reafor taken from the Scope of the Place, interpret, that Affertion of the new Creation. However, he will not allow, that Christ is an G 2 Agent,

<sup>(3)</sup> Tit. ii 10. 11,

Agent, in Works which are properly divine; but an Instrument only. And, why does he so interpret? Is it because the Scripture elsewhere teaches us, that our Saviour is a Creature only, and that in divine Operations, he is no more than an Instrument? No, and therefore, he in Fact denies those Principles, that are delivered in the Word of God; which he professes to be the Rule of his Faith, and by Consequence he is condemned of himself.

Perfons, who hold the heretical Notions, above mentioned, ought to be rejected by Christians, viz. they ought not to be admitted to Fellowship with them in Christian Institu-Men, who maintain the first heretical Principle, viz. that the Law is not a Rule of Conduct to Believers, most, as I suppose, will allow, that they are unfit for a Participation in the Privileges of a Christian Society. And fuch, who embrace the other erroneous Opinions, before expressed, cannot regularly joyn in Christian Worship: If they do, they must worship a Creature; and if they distinguish upon Worship in their Minds; and pay supreme to God, and subordinate to the Man Jesus, then their Worship of Christ, greatly differs from that Worship, which Christians give to him, and wherein they feem to join, who believe him to be God, and as fuch adore him joyntly with the Father. They cannot unite with Christians in Doxologies to Christ, as a Redeemer, because they do not confider him, as a properly meritorious Caufe

of the Pardon of their Sins, nor of their Peace and Reconciliation with God. How can they intreat with Christians, that God awould not enter into Judgment with them, and proceed towards them, as their Actions deferve his Fayour, or merit his Displeasure? Since it is their fixed Opinion, that they are to be tryed, judged, and proceeded towards hereafter, on the Foundation of their own Works. how can they join with Christians, in ascribing Praise and Glory to God, for his regenerating them by his holy Spirit? Seeing they maintain, that Regeneration is not effected by divine Grace; but that it follows upon an Act of the human Will, or that a Man becomes holy, because he chuses so to be, and that this his Choice is not produced by a super-natural Influence on his Will, determining it to make that Choice.

Mr. Foster maintains, with the Socinians, that it is sufficient to believe, that Jesus is the Christ, in various Parts of his Writings. For the Proof of which, he produces those Words of the Apostle John: Whosoever believeth, that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God (h). But this Text includes far more in it, than he, or they, are willing to allow. Christian Belief is not to be reduced to a single Article, by that, or any other parallel Scripture. For, to believe, that Jesus is Christ, comprehends many momentous Branches of revealed Truth, relating to his Person, his Offices, and Work, and G 3 Sufferings,

<sup>( )</sup> Page 284.

Sufferings, and those Benefits, which we derive from him in that Character. That, as to his Person, he is God's own or proper Son: The Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person .- That, as to his Offices, he is the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church.-That, as to his Work, as he is invested with these Offices, he instructs his People, atones for their Sins, and makes Intercession for them; and subdues their rebellious Hearts; gives Laws to them, conquers all their Enemies, Sin, Satan, the World, and Death; and defends their Persons in all Dangers, and from the Rage and Malice of their numerous and potent Adversaries.—That he died for his People, to make Reconciliation for their Iniquities. That all Supplies of Grace are now derived from him; and that he will communicate to them confummate and endless Bliss, in the future State. These important Truths, with more that might be mentioned, are comprized in believing, that Iesus is the Christ. And, therefore, it is a vain Thing to attempt, to reduce the Christian Belief, to one fingle Article of Faith. If we do not believe those Particulars concerning Jefus, we shall be found to deny, that he is, what is defigned by his Character of Messiah or Christ. The Person who denies, that Jesus is Jehovah, God, Immanuel, God with us .that he is the Prophet, Priest, and King of the Church. That he suffered for us, or, that be was wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised

bruised for our Iniquities .- That be made bis Soul an Offering for Sin, and thereby, made Reconciliation for our Crimes .- That he has brought in an everlasting Righteousness; and fo is of God made unto us, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption; yea, our All and in All. I fay, the Man who denies these Things, denies, that Jesus is in his Person, what the Messiah was to be: He denies, that Jesus has done, what the Messiah was to do; and, by Consequence, he denies him to be Christ. And fince he denies, that Jesus is, what the Messiah was to be; fince he denies, that Jesus has done, what the Meffiah was to accomplish in Favour of his People, he is not a Christian. To give to Jesus the Name of Christ, and deny that he is fuch in his Person, Offices, Work and Benefits, as the Scriptures of the Prophets, reprefent the Messiah should be, in each of these Particulars; is only allowing him the Title, without the Dignity, Power and Influence, which are effential to that exalted Character. If it is the Defign of Mr. Foster, with the Socinians, to prove, by this Observation, that no more is necessary to be believed, in order to Salvation, than barely this, that Jesus is the Christ; and that whatever Truths relating to him in that Character, may be denied without any Danger to the Souls of Men: By what has been now faid, it evidently appears to be false; and that Persons may allow, that Jesus was he, who was intended and described by that G 4

that Character, and yet be Heretics. Herefy is a Denial of some momentous Branch of revealed Religion, and not of natural. To deny any Part of natural Religion is Atheism: To deny any fundamental Part of revealed, is Herefy. A Man may maintain all the Principles of natural Religion, and notwithstanding that, be a Heretic. For, Herefies do not intend the Denial of the Religion of Nature, that is Atheism; but they design the Denial of some important Parts of the Christian Revelation. To think otherwise, necessarily confounds Atheism and Heresy, which are not the fame; but entirely distinct Things. And such Persons, who reject Christian Principles, or fuch Principles, as are peculiar and effential to Christianity, ought to be rejected by every Christian Community.

III. I beg leave to take into Confideration, the Conduct of Calvin, in the Affair of Servetus; who suffered at Geneva, on account of various heretical and blasphemous Notions, which he held, and endeavour'd all he could to propagate. That great Reformer was of Opinion, that Heretics ought to be punished. And as this was his Perfuafion, it is not to be wondered at, that he concerned himself in the Profecution of Servetus. For, herein, he acted but agreeably to what he thought to be his Duty. He has often been reproached on this Account, and particularly of late, by feveral Persons. In order, that the greater Odium might be fixed on the Memory of Calvin,

Calvin, Servetus has been represented, in the most inossensive Light, he could be, and the worst Things he expressed, which, I think, must raise the Indignation of every virtuous and pious Mind, have been carefully concealed, with this View, that People might think, that Calvin was so fond of his own Sentiments, and so impatient of Contradiction, that he would not stick to attempt the Ruin of any Person, who dared to oppose his darling Notions. How much of Justice and Generosity appear in the Relation, that some have given of this Affair, will soon be evident.

Servetus his strict Regard to Truth, in Defence of his pious Principles, was such, that he most considently asserted, what he knew nothing at all of (i). And affirmed, that some eminent Persons were of his Sentiments, who held them in Contempt (k). His Modesty and Civility were so singular, that he could scarce speak to Calvin, without using this very decent Language to him, thou liest (i). His Reverence and Awe arising from a Sense of the Solemnity of the Doctrine of

<sup>(</sup>i) Fuit enim hoc illi solenne: Scriptores quorum nunquam Libros inspexerat, audacissime citare. Fidelis Exposit. Errorum Michael Servet. page, 523. Edit. Amst.

<sup>(</sup>k) Tantum enim abest a Spe Resipiscentiæ, ut non dubitet sanctis Viris Capitoni, & Oecolampadio aspergere hanc Maculam, quasi Socii suerint. Calvin. Epist. Sultzer.

<sup>(1)</sup> Toties enim illud suum mentiris, Calvino impingit, toties Magum, & Simonem Magum criminatur, meminisse pigeat ac pudeat Respons. Minist. Tigurin. Eccles.

the Trinity, whereof he wrote and discoursed, were so remarkable, that he often called it, The Three-headed Dog: A devilish Imagination: A Monster of three Heads: A Deceit of Satan (m). And of the Sonship of Christ, his extreme Humility led him to express himself, thus: If Christ be the Son of God, they must then say, that God had some spiritual Wife, or that he alone is both masculine and feminine, or an Hermaphrodite, was both Father and Mother; for the Import of the Word will not allow, that any one should be called a Father without a Mother. If the Logos was a Son born of a Father without a Mother, tell me bow he brought him forth, whether by the Belly, or by the Side ("). So exceedingly careful was this Man, to maintain such Notions of the Nature of God, as might influence himself and others, to adore him, trust in him, and praise him, that he declared, It was a general Principle with him, that all Things sprung from God by Traduction; and that the Nature of Things is the substantial Spirit of God .- That all Creatures are of the proper Substance of God;

(m) Plus centum Locis Trinitas ab eo vocatur triceps Cerberus, diabolicum Phantasma, Geryonis Monstrum, Illusio Satanæ, & quid non? Fidelis Exposit. &c. page 549.

<sup>(1)</sup> Debuissent ergo dicere, quod Deus habebat Uxorem quandam spiritualem, vel quod solus ipse masculino-scemineus aut Hermaphroditus, simul erat Pater & Mater, nam Ratio Vocabuli non patitur, ut quis dicatur sine Matre Pater. Si Logos Filius erat, natus ex Patre sine Matre; dic mihi quomodo peperit eum, per Ventrem an per Latus, Dr. Owen's Presace to bis Answer to Biddle, page 44.

and that all Things are full of Gods (°). That Deity was substantially communicated to Devils, and to Wood, and to Stone (P). Since Servetus was a Person of such strict Veracity, and fo very courteous and civil in his Deportment: And fince his Awe was fo great, when difcourfing or writing on theological Subjects, that he could not but use the most becoming Expressions upon those Subjects: Since his Notions of the Nature of God were fo well calculated to raise and cherish in the Minds of Men, a holy Dread of his incomprehenfible Majesty; was it not a most inhuman and barbarous Act in Calvin, to get him imprifoned, and accuse him of Heresy and Blasphemy, before the States of Geneva? Who can forbear to censure him for so doing, as an Enemy to Liberty of Conscience, as an implacable and bloody-minded Man, against an innocent Person? None certainly, except those,

(°) Quum dicerit ex propria Dei Substantia omnes Creaturas, atque ita omnia Deorum plena,—Quid miser? Siquis Pavimentum hoc calcando, se Deum tuum calcare dicat, an non te pudebit tantæ Absurditatis? Tunc ille ego vero & Scamnum hoc, quicquid ostendes, Dei Substantiam esse non dubito. Quum rursus objectum foret, ergo Diabolus substantialiter Deus erit: Ille in Cachinnum solutus, an hoc vobis dubium est, inquit? Hoc vero mihi generale Principium est; ex traduce Dei orta esse omnia, & Rerum Naturam substantialem Dei Spiritum. Fidelis Exposit, &c. page 522.

(P) Sed tantus fuit Furor, ut non dubitaverit dicere, Diabolis inesse Divinitatem. Imo singulis plures inesse Deos: Quia Deitas substantialiter tam illis quam Ligno & La-

pidi communicata fuerit. Calv. Epift. Farel.

if any fuch there be, who think it is not allowable, to lye most impudently, to behave most indecently, to speak on divine Subjects most irreverently, and to advance and endeavour to propagate the most unworthy Notions of the Nature of God; Notions, which naturally tend to cause Men to imagine, that God, himfelf, may possibly become fuch as the Devil 25.

Gentlemen who blame Calvin for acting in this Affair, conceal those blasphemous Principles of Servetus, which is not fair and generous. Grotius speaking of this Wretch, fays, but concerning the Trinity, Servetus did not, in all Things, it may be, think right; for a Mistake is easy in Matters raised so far above the human Understanding (4). Not a Word of his horrid Blasphemy; he was willing that should be buried in Oblivion. same learned Person, afferts a direct Falsehood, viz. that the Germans knew nothing of Servetus, but what Calvin told them (1). That is not true; for he infected Germany with his poisonous Notions, long before he fuffered at Geneva (s). Grotius also represents him

(1) Germani de Serveto nihil sciverunt nisi quod ipsis

dixit Calvinus, ibid. page 649.

<sup>(9)</sup> At de Trinitate non per omnia bene sensit Servetus fieri potest; facilis enim Lapsus in Rebus adeo supra humanum captum positis. Operum Theolog. Tom. iii. pag. 503.

<sup>(5)</sup> Nomen Serveti Hispani vobis auditum esse non dubito, qui ante annos viginti virulento Libello, multifque facrilegis Erroribus referto, Germaniam vestram infecit. Calv. Epist. Eccl. Francford. Pastor.

him as humble and modest, and willing to be better instructed by Calvin, if mistaken, which is no more true than the former; for he used Calvin with the greatest Rudeness and Incivility imaginable.

These are not the only false Things which that learned Man relates, to injure Calvin's Name, and the Name of his Followers; which shall be proved from his own Writings,

at any Time, if Proof of it is demanded.

Mr. Samuel Chandler censures Calvin, for his Treatment of Servetus (1). He calls his Veracity into Question, because he denies positively, that he held an epistolary Correspondence with the Papists at Vienne, where Servetus was condemned for his Blafphemy; but, as I think, without sufficient Ground. Servetus his Charge is of no Weight at all. And it is not likely, if it was Fact, that Calvin fent his Papers and Letters to the Papists there, that they would have such a Concern for his Reputation, as to conceal his having fo done, when they knew, that he positively denied it. Nor would it have been prudent in him, to deny a Fact, which his worst Enemies were capable of proving at any Time: And fince they never have proved it, there is no Reason to think, that it is true. Tho' they had those Letters and Papers, they might not be fent by Calvin.

He

<sup>(1)</sup> The Introduction to his Translation of Limborch's History of the Inquisition, page 64, 65.

He, doubtless, thought, that his strict Regard to Truth was fo well known, that his plain Denial of this Matter, would be fufficient to wipe off the Calumny; especially, confidering, that it was in the Power of his most inveterate Enemies to detect and expose his Breach of Truth, if he had been guilty of it: But in so thinking, it seems, he was mistaken. This Gentleman observes, that Servetus could not differ more from Calvin, than Calvin did from the Papists ("). But this Observation is not true; for Calvin did not think, any more than the Papists thought it, that the Substance of God is communicated to Devils, and to Wood and to Stone, which Servetus affirmed: And tho' Mr. Chandler could not but know this, he thought proper entirely to coneeal it, which, I think, was acting an unfair and ungenerous Part. He bestows the Name of Protestant on Servetus (\*). The Man was not of the Popish Religion, that is certain, neither was he of the Protestant Religion, as I think; for I am perfuaded, that he had no Religion at all. That Person who can persuade himself, that when he treads on a Stone or a Stool, he tramples upon the Substance of God bimself, can't have any Reverence or Fear of the divine Being, I am confident.

Mr. (alias) Dr. George Benson, some Time since, was pleased to publish in the Old Whig, what he calls a brief Account of Calvin's burning Servetus for an Heretic. And what he

published

published at several Times in that Paper, he has favoured the World, with a Publication of entire. In this Account, he blames Calvin exceedingly for his Treatment of Servetus: But is entirely filent concerning the wicked, blafphemous Principles, which this Wretch held, and confidently afferted. He is offended with Calvin for calling him, in his Writings, a profligate Fellow, full of Pride, the proudest Knave of the Spanish Nation, and a Dog (1). I confess, that I do not like bard Names, should be used towards any, who appear to have a true Sense of Religion, tho' they may err in some Points of Faith; but I am not ashamed to say, that this Servetus was a Dog, of whom, those who had the least Concern for the Principles of natural, not to fay of revealed Religion, did well to beware ('). This Gentleman afferts, that Calvin and others excited People, who had never read his Books, to condemn him unheard .-That they represented him as no Christian, as an Atheist, because he did not believe Christianity according to their Interpretation .- That they violently seized and burned his Books, as full of Blasphemy (2). The first of these Things, is entirely false, as will soon appear. The second was no unjust Representation: For the Man who can think, that the Substance of Deity, of Devils, of Wood, and of Stone, is the same, cannot have any Religion at all, I am fully perswaded. As to the third, I know no Harm in feizing and burning Books that are stuffed with

<sup>(</sup>V) Page 11. (2) Phil. iii. 2. (2) Page 23.

stuffed with Blasphemy, which his certainly were, if any thing in the World may be fo accounted. Farther, this Person says, that they misrepresented his Doctrine, expressing it in their own Words, and fixing odious Consequences upon him.——And charged him with several Things. which he utterly disowned (b). This was vile Conduct indeed, if Dr. Benson can prove it let him; but he never will be able to give Proof of it, and therefore he ought to be ashamed of exhibiting this black Charge against Calvin and his Friends. Servetus, desiring that his Case might be considered by other Churches, Calvin readily confented to it. And by a Decree of the Senate, he drew up some Propositions out of his Books, which were given to him in Writing. He was allowed to retract what he might discover was not true, that he had wrote; and to refute any Thing that he thought Calvin had evilly wrested, and to defend from the Word of God, what he apprehended was unjustly condemned (c). So fays Calvin: And what could be fairer, than this? It is therefore false, that Calvin excited People to condemn him unheard. And it is not true, that he represented him

(b) Page 24.

(c) Deinde quum ille provocaret ad alias Ecclesias: Libenter a me hæc quoque Conditio suscepta suit. Itaque clariff. Senatus nofter Finem Ambagibus facere volens, decrevit ut Propositiones excerperem ex Serveti ipsius Libris, quæ ei scriptæ darentur. Eodem Senatus consulto permisfum illi est, ut retractaret siquid videret a se non recte scriptum: Siquid vero deprehenderet male a nobis detortum refutaret : Siquid injuste putaret damnatum, ex Verbo Dei defenderet. Fidelis Exposit. &c. page 523.

him in a false Light. Nor is it true, that Calvin charged him with holding several Things, which he utterly disowned. The Dostor says, it is very likely, that his Enemies would not suffer him to speak to the People (d); i. e. at the Place of Execution. This is a salse Supposition, if Calvin may be credited; for he tells us, that no Man bindered him from speaking (e). But, perhaps, no Credit is to be given to Calvin in this Affair. The Dostor ought to be ashamed, and covered with Consustant of the having published so many Untruths, in order to blacken Calvin's Character. Upon the whole,

If it is considered, that Calvin was of Opinion, that blaspheming Heretics ought to be punished: If it be considered, that this Wretch did blaspheme, in such a Manner, as I think no Apostate Spirit would ever do: For I can't persuade myself to imagine, that the Devil would dare to say, that Deity is substantially communicated to him, or to Wood, or to Some: If it is considered, that this Man did not reason but rave; that he did not argue, but revile; that he did not modestly oppose, but wickedly reproach, what Calvin thought to be sacred, and of the greatest Importance: If it is considered, that his Notions were destructive of the whole of Religion, as well of natural, as of revealed: If it is considered, that Calvin

H pro-

<sup>(</sup>d) Page 22.

<sup>(</sup>c) Nemo enim a loquendi ipsum Libertate prohibuit. Fidelis Exposit. page 523.

proceeded in this Affair with Caution, and confulted other Ministers and Churches about it: I fay, if these Things are duly considered, furely, tho' we may think, that he was miftaken, in conceiving, that Herefy is a Crime punishable by the Magistrate; yet, we can't reasonably censure him for acting in this Business, as a cruel and bloody-minded Man, against such as differed from him, which, fome Persons seem inclined to do. A very wife, and moderate Person, says thus, upon reciting a Passage of Servetus's, which is above mentioned. To this Height of Atheism and Blasphemy had Satan wrought up the Spirit of the Man. So that I must say, he is the only Person in the World, that I ever heard or read of, that ever died upon the Account of Religion, in Reference to whom the Zeal of them that put bim to Death may be acquitted: But of these Things, God will judge. Socious Jays, he died calling upon Christ; those that were present, fay the quite contrary; and that in Horror be roared out Misericordia to the Magistrates, but nothing else: But Arcana Deo (f). I will not fay, that it was undoubtedly a righteous Thing to put him to Death; but this I will fay, that I think, it was just with God to leave him, to fink into Horror and Despair in his Sufferings, on Account of his dreadful Blasphemies.

<sup>(1)</sup> Dr. Owen in his Preface to the Answer to Biddle, page 44.

#### CHAP. VI.

### Of Schism.

R. Foster having given us an Account of his Sentiments concerning Herefy; in his next Sermon, he discourses of Schism. Wherein, I apprehend, he is very defective; and that he also advances fome false Principles. He declines giving a Definition of a Christian Society or Church, which was necessary to be done, in order to instruct the Reader about the true Nature of Schism, whereof he treats. This is not a little furprizing, because, the Words of his Text are addressed to a particular Body or Society of Christians at Corinth, incorporated together, to maintain Christian Principles, to celebrate Christian Institutions, and to exercise Christian Discipline, with a View to the Glory of God, and their Edification. A Number of Believers so united together, only constitute a Christian Church. And, therefore, a Man declining to hold Communion with any Church, Roman or Reformed, whereof, none can declare, how he became a Member, otherwise than by Birth, and not by any Act of his own, he cannot, with the least Appearance of Truth, be thought to incur the Guilt of Schism. H 2 Which

Which one Observation sufficiently justifies all the reformed Churches, from the Imputation of Schism, the Papists fix on them, for their Separation from that corrupt Church: And it alfo justifies all particular Congregations of Protestants, in their Separation from the national Church, wherein they happened to be All Union among Men, whether of a born. religious or civil Nature, certainly ought to be founded in voluntary Confent and Choice; where it is not, a Separation may be maintained, without the least Violation of Right. a Separation in that Case becomes necessary, except we will fubmit to be wholly governed by others, without judging for ourselves, in the religious and civil Life; which would be the worst of Slavery.

I. The first false Principle, which Mr. Foster advances on this Subject is, that Uniformity of Sentiments, in Relation to Christian Doctrines, is not necessary to Christian Communion.——That it is sufficient to believe, in general, that fesus is the Christ, the Son of God, including in it, the Belief of his Miracles and Resurrection, and the extraordinary Powers committed to the Apostles (a). The Falsehood of this Principle appears, by what has been said above, on the Subject of Heresy. To believe, that Jesus is the Christ, includes in it, many momentous Truths, which has been before proved, as I hope, beyond Contradiction. Christ is the Center and Sum of all

revealed

<sup>(°)</sup> Pege 302.

revealed Truth. This Gentleman charges all fuch, who deny Communion to those, who believe that Jesus is the Christ, let their Sentiments be what they will, with Respect to particular Points of Doctrine, in a most severe Manner; as unjust, anti-christian, and schismatical. According to his Opinion, Arians, Pelagians, Socinians, Arminians, Calvinists and Baxterians, ought to unite in Christian Fellowship. Whether we believe Christ to be God, or a Man only, it matters not. Those who are firmly perfuaded, that he is God, and therefore adore him; may join in Worship with such as esteem him a mere Man: And, confequently, if he is the Object of their Worship at all, it must be of an inferior and fubordinate Kind, and fuch as those, who believe him to be God, dare not give to him. It is according to him, of no Importance, whether, we believe that Christ, by his Sufferings and Death procured our Pardon, and fecured to us a Deliverance from Penalty or no. Such who are perfuaded of the Truth and vast Moment of these Things, conclude, that they are under infinite Obligations to Christ, and express in religious Worship their Gratitude to him, on these Accounts, in the highest Strains of Praise. Persons, who account these Principles merely whimsical Notions, yea, gross Absurdities, may unite with them in all devotional Acts. It is according to his Opinion, not of the least Weight in Christianity, whether we think, that we H 3

are made meet for a better State, folety, by the Influence of the Grace of God upon us, or not. Those, who are fully convinced, that all their Holiness is derived from God, and that it is the mere Effect of his gracious Operations upon them, will ascribe to him their most hearty Thanks, for his making them meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. And fuch, who cannot believe, that their Choice of Holiness, is wholly and folely owing to the gracious, fweet and effectual Influences of divine Grace upon them, may join in all Acts of religious Worship and Communion, with those of the contrary Opinion; tho' in Conformity to their own Principles, they must necessarily refuse to give that Praise to God and his Grace, which the others most gladly ascribe to both. These brief Obfervations clearly enough discover the Absurdity of this Principle, viz. that Uniformity of Sentiments, with Respect to those Points of Doctrine is not necessary to Christian Communion. Mr. Foster may perhaps, esteem them merely Matters of Speculation, and of no Significancy or Weight; but they really are the Foundation of all Christian Experience, and of Christian Worship and Practice.

As to what he supposes concerning the Impossibility, of a Unity in Principles, among Christians, from the different Capacities of Men, the different Manner of their Education, their different Advantages, Passions, Prejudices, &c. it is of no Moment at all. For

Men

Men, how much foever they may differ in these Respects, they can as easily understand, the true Meaning of the Language of Scripture, in general, as of the Language, this Gentleman uses, and consequently, they are able to collect from the Word of God, what Principles they ought to believe. The Bible is not penn'd in obscure and unintelligible Language, in the doctrinal Part of it, any more than it is in the moral Part. To imagine that the Rule of our Faith, is hard and difficult to be understood, is a base Reflection

on the infinitely wife Author of it.

2. Another false Principle is, that Uniformity in external Modes of Worship, and Discipline, is not a necessary Term of Communion (b.) It is doubtless necessary, that those who join in Acts of religious Worship, should be agreed in the Manner of it; how elfe can mutual Edification be promoted? And without it, due Order cannot be maintained, but Confusion must be introduced. Or Dissatisfaction will attend the Minds of some, who think, that divine Service is not performed, in fuch a Manner, as it ought to be. And Members of the same Society, it is proper and necessary should be of one Mind with respect to Discipline, how else can it be duly exercised? Discipline is the orderly Government of a Chriftian Church. A Disagreement therefore, about the Nature and Manner of it, among the Members, must be attended with great Incon-H 4 venience

<sup>(</sup>b) Page 306.

venience to the Body, in a variety of Cases, which may happen. But Mr. Foster seems to be unacquainted with the Nature and Ends of Christian Fellowship, and therefore, he treats on this Subject, in such a lax and geneneral Manner, as is quite disagreeable to both. In order to form a right Notion of Schism, it is necessary, to consider what a Christian Society or Church is, and the important Ends of Christian Communion. A Christian Church is a Number of Believers incorporated together, to maintain Christian Principles, to celebrate Christian Institutions, and to exercise Christian Discipline, as was before observed, in order to the Glory of God, and the mutual Edification of the feveral Members fo united. And, therefore, 1. No Man can be a Member of that Body, but by a voluntary Choice on his Part; and the free Confent of fuch a Society on their Part. 2. A Refusal to join with any particular Body of Christians, thus incorporated, is not Schism. For where a Union has not commenced, a Schism cannot be. 3. A peaceable and regular Departure from fuch a Society, for lawful Reasons, viz. for better Edification, or fuller Satisfaction, in Matters of Soul-concern, is not Schism.

Schism, as stated by the Apostle Paul, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, consists in these Things. (1.) In a contentious Temper and Practice. There arose among the Members of the Church at Corinth, Envying, Strife,

Strife, and Divisions: On these Accounts, he charges them with Carnality, and walking as Men, and not as Christians (c.) Those Animosities which were fomented among them, were from the Flesh. (2.) We are informed, that their Contentions were about the Ministers of Christ. Some of them were of Paul, in Opposition to Apollos. Some were of Cephas in Opposition to the two former, and others were of Christ, in Opposition to all the three beforenamed. (3.) They behaved in an irregular and unfeemly Manner, when they were afsembled together for public Worship. Or they were not united, as a Christian Body ought to be, in their religious Acts at those Seasons (d.) These Things are the Account of Schism, as it is stated by the Apostle, and charged on some of the Members of that Church. Hence we fee, that Schism may be without a Separation from the external Communion of a Church.—That it is an Opposition, to those, who of Right, are the Ministers of a Church, or an Attempt to alienate the Minds and Affections of the Members from them. - That it is a Breach of Christian Love and Unity, which ought to fubfift, and by all poffible Means should be promoted, to the Honour of Christ and the spiritual Welfare of the Community. It appears, by the Epiftle of Clemens of Rome to that Church, that they afterwards also fell into Schisms and Divisions. A Part of them, deposed their Bishops or Presbyters,

as that antient Writer indifferently stiles them, though they were found in the Faith and of good Morals (c). For which Reason, he, or rather, the Church at Rome, in whose Name that famous Epistle was penned, accuse them of Schism, and in a very importunate Manner, and with a great Variety of moving Arguments, befeech them to return to their Duty, as Members of the Body. If particular Perfons, approve not of the Ministry of a Church, whereof they are Members, they have no legal Right, to endeavour to lessen the Esteem. which their Fellow-Members have of their Minister, to their Disturbance and Grief. If they cannot enjoy Edification, in that Community, under the Ministry of it, it is their Wisdom and also their Duty, to seek it where they may reasonably hope to meet with it, and peaceably and regularly depart from that Society, unto some other Church in Fellowship with that. A Man cannot resolutely continue in a Society, among whom he receives not Edification, which is the great End of Christian Fellowship, in order to carry any Point, that he hath in View, to the Grief of the Members of that Society, without incurring the Guilt of Schism.

<sup>(°)</sup> Edit. Oxon. page 102.

#### CHAP. VII.

# Of the Image of God in Man.

In treating on this Subject, I propose, to shew wherein the Image of God consists, which, Man, in his original State, undoubtedly was the Subject of.—
That, that Image is now defaced, or that human Nature is now corrupt and depraved.—
Enquire how it became so.—And attend to Mr. Foster's Reasoning, to prove, that Man still bears the divine Image.

I. I would shew, wherein the Image of God consists, which Man in his Primitive State, undoubtedly, was the happy Subject of.

1. This divine Likeness is proper to an intelligent Creature: Or a reasonable Nature only can bear that Image. The unintelligent Part of the Creation, cannot be supposed to have this divine Impress. Irrational Beings, it is impossible, that they should be like to God, in Wisdom, Goodness and Holiness.

2. As only intelligent Creatures can be like to God, or bear his Image, so, it is certain, that every such reasonable Nature, was originally possessed of his Likeness: For, it is irrational to conceive, that the infinitely wise Author

Author of all Things could create any Being imperfect, in its Kind. And, therefore,

3. Angels and Man, who are intelligent Creatures, it must be concluded, were formed with this divine Likeness. For, as the infinite Perfections of God, will not allow us to imagine, that he is the Author of any imperfect Work; and the Perfection of a reasonable Creature, is its Likeness to him, it necessarily follows, that both Angels and Man were

created in the Image of God.

4. The divine Image does not confift in a Power of reasoning, or of discerning Truth, and the Fitness, or Unfitness of Actions: Nor in a natural Liberty and Freedom of the Will, to chuse what the Understanding sees to be good, right, and sit. If the Image of God consisted in such a Power, so long as any Creature retains a Power of reasoning, of chusing, and refusing, he must be like to God. For unless Reason is lost, the divine

Image cannot be loft. But,

5. The Likeness of the reasonable Creature to God, consists in a Perfection of Knowledge, in pure and perfect Love to him, and in a Disposition to obey his holy Will in all Things: Or in Wisdom, Righteousness, and true Holiness. Man as created by God, was not in the least defective in his Understanding; his Mind was clear, and his Reason was not liable to mistake, in enquiring into Principles, wherein his Duty, his Honour, and his Happiness were concerned. In his original State, he was absolutely

folutely free from every evil Biass. There was then no Inclination in him to what would dishonour his Maker, and injure himself. As in no Instance, he was incapable of discerning his Duty, he had full Power to perform it, without Defect, or any Tincture of Evil attending him, in his Acts of Obedience to the Will of his God. Is this the present State of human Nature? Is the Reason of Man as clear, and as extensively discerning, as ever it was? Is there now perfect Love to God in the Heart of Man, and an entire Approbation of his Duty, in the whole Compass of it? And, is there no evil Inclination to the contrary in him? Are Mankind as able to practife all the Parts of their Duty, in as perfect a Manner, or without all Mixture of Sin; as ever Man was capable of discharging it? If Mr. Foster will maintain, that Men now bear the Image of their Maker, he must be obliged to affert each of these Things. And if he really can be persuaded, that human Nature, is at present, the Subject of perfect Knowledge, of perfect Love to Holiness, and Ability to practise it, in all its Branches, no wonder, that he very ill refents the base Representation, which fome fome have given of our Nature, to the intolerable Difgrace and Reproach of it.

II. Man is not now in the Image of God. This is fo clear a Point, that it is furprizing Proof of it should be rendered necessary, by any Person's Manner of writing on the Subject.

But

But it is so fallen out. Some seem to be so far blinded by Prejudice, that they cannot discern a Truth, which is as visible as the Sun at Noon. The following Particulars, I apprehend, most evidently prove the Impersection

and Depravity of human Nature.

1. All have finned. The holy Scripture positively afferts this, and therefore, no Man is innocent. Every one of the Sons of Men, is under a Charge of Guilt, confidered in himfelf. What soever Things the Law saith, it faith to them, that are under the Law; that every Mouth may be stopped, and that all the World may become guilty before God (a). We have all finned, and come short of his Glory (b). If any individual of the human Race, is of Opinion, that he has never violated the Law of his Maker, he is most certainly under an Infatuation of the worst Kind. If we say, that we have not finned, we make him a Liar, and his Word is not in us (c). If we fay, that we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us (d). Persons of the best Character among Men, are guilty of Sin: For there is not a just Man upon Earth, that doeth good, and finneth not (e); consequently, Men, univerfally, are Sinners. And, therefore, no Man is now in the Image of God. Except we can perfuade ourselves to think, that tho' Men have offended their Creator, they are still such, as he made them; and that his lovely Image

(d) Verfe 8. (e) Eccles vii. 20.

<sup>(</sup>a) Rom. iii. 19. (b) Verse 23. (c) 1 John i. 10.

is in no Degree defaced, by the Guilt which they have contracted.—That, tho' they are guilty, they are perfectly holy, innocent and finless in their Nature. In many Things (not in a few only) we offend all (f). No good Man therefore, is perfect in his Conduct. But, perhaps, Mr. Foster may think, that tho' Men are imperfect in their Behaviour, they still retain the original Perfection of their Nature.—That Men are still in the Image and Likeness of God, tho' they act contrary to his most holy Will.—That Imperfection, in the Practice of Duty, is no Proof of Imperfection taking Place in any of our reasoning Paymen.

in any of our reasoning Powers.

2. Every Man is, in himself, under a Sentence of Condemnation, and deferves to fuffer All Men, according to the Punishment. righteous Judgment of God, are worthy of Death. Human Nature is loft and miserable; if any of that Race are not fo; they have no Sin to be forgiven: Happiness is their Due upon the Foot of Right; it is not bestowed on them, as an Effect of Grace and Mercy; but on the Foundation of Justice: God cannot deny them his Favours, but he must violate the plainest Rules of Equity. They have no Need of a Saviour at all. If God is displeased with them, he must dislike his own amiable and beautiful Image. If he punishes them, he must give Pain and Torment to his innocent Creatures, possessed of that Perfection, with which he adorned them in their Creation, and

on Account of which, they once were pleafing to him. In thort, to fay, that any Man now bears the Image of God, is to fay, by necessary Implication, that that Man is happy, and that he cannot be miserable.——That God cannot but approve of him, and communicate his Benefits to him; because he necessarily approves and favours his own Likeness, in whomfoever it is. As certainly as these Things are absurd and false, so certainly is it false, that

any Man is now in the Image of God.

3. If any Person hath this divine Impress upon him, he hath no Need of Regeneration, he is undoubtedly fit for the Enjoyment of God, whose shining Image he bears. A Communication of Holiness to him is unnecessary; he hath perfect Purity of Heart already. He cannot exercise Repentance. What should he repent of? Not that he is like to God; and unlike him, it feems, he is not. He cannot forfake Sin, for he has not at any Time fallen into the Practice or Commission of Evil. It is irrational to think, that he can abase and humble himself before God: He has no Cause of Selfdiflike and Humiliation, for he is as fair and beautiful as God made him, and therefore not to approve of himself, must reflect Dishonour on God his Maker, and he can't but confider him the Author of an unlovely Creature. He has no Reason to acknowledge, that he is undeferving of the Favour, Protection, and Bleffing of the Almighty; for he is not in his Disposition, and he has never been in his Behaviour,

haviour, any Thing, but what God may and must approve of, justify, and reward. All these Particulars are true of a Man bearing the Image and Likeness of God. If any such Man is now to be found, he may look down on the rest of Mankind, with an Air of Contempt, and fay to all his Fellow-creatures, who are depraved : Stand by your felves, come not near to me, for I am bolier than you. I can never unite with you in any religious Services, because I am such as you are not. Such a Man cannot be the Subject of Regeneration, take it in what View foever you shall please; either, as the Infusion of good Habits, or as a Reformation of Life; because he is not the Subject of any evil Habits; and his Conduct, in all Refpects, has corresponded with the holy Principles, from which he acted in every Part of it. Our Saviour has plainly and positively afferted the Necessity of the New-Birth, with Relation to every Man: Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God (8). And, therefore, no Person is now possessed of the Likeness and Image of God, wherein Man was created. These Things are expressed in the holy Scriptures, in so plain and full a Manner, that I should think, none but such who are under the Influence of the most unreasonable Prejudice, can admit of a Doubt concerning their Truth. And they most evidently prove, that no Man retains the Image of his Maker, or the original Purity, and Holinefs, which

<sup>(8)</sup> John iii. 3.

which human Nature was once the happy Sub-

ject of.

Now, if it is fact, that Men univerfally are corrupt; that no Individual of the human Race, is free from the Taint of moral Impurity: Is it not foolish and absurd, fiercely to dispute how and when this Contagion infected our Nature? If, indeed, by disputing this Point, it could be demonstrated, that the Infection hath not reached some Persons among us; that there are some of Mankind, whom this moral Diforder has not touched; it is confessed, that the Contest is important, and the Success glorious; Innocence would be bravely and justly defended from an unrighteous Charge and Imputation of Guilt. But as the Distemper is epidemical, and no Man is wholly clear of the poisonous Infection of Sin; it is a Matter of far less Consideration, in what Way the deadly Poison was conveyed, or how it diffused its destructive Venom into every one of the Sons of Men. Whether it is conveyed to us in our Conception and Birth, or whether it touched and infected us afterwards: To determine this Point with Certainty, is nothing at all to our Cure and Recovery. Infected we are, and I am perfuaded, that no Man can remember the Moment wherein he was perfect, and wholly free from this fatal Difeafe. And, therefore, it seems probable to Reason itself, that we are depraved from our Birth; which I should think is sufficient, at least, to make Men modest, if duly considered, and careful

careful not to deny the Account, which Reve-

lation gives us of this Matter.

III. I shall enquire how we became depraved and corrupt. In this Enquiry we must be content to be guided and determined by Scripture; for tho' it is evident to Reason, that we are not what we ought to be, and, consequently, that Man is not now, what he once was; and tho' it seems probable to Reason, that our Corruption is as early as our Birth; a certain Demonstration of this Truth, is not, I think, to be obtained from Reason. The scriptural Account of this Matter, the Reader may please to take in the following Particulars.

- 1. Adam begat a Son in bis own Likeness, and after his Image (h): He had then defaced the Image of God, which was impressed upon him in his Creation. In Consequence of his Rebellion and Apostacy, he had lost his original Purity, and was become the Subject of Sin inherent. If therefore, he begat a Son like himself; that Son could not be in the Image of God, viz. pure and holy in his Nature; but he must be born corrupt and sinful.
- 2. Job speaking of human Nature, pronounces it impossible to bring a clean Thing out of an unclean: Who can bring a clean Thing out of an unclean? Not one (1). Which is a very strong Negation. It therefore, was his Opinion, that impure Parents cannot pro-I 2 create

<sup>(</sup>h) Gen. v. iii.

the Parents are, such are their Descendants, in their Nature. Children we often see inherit the bodily Diseases of their Parents, from their Birth: And they derive from them a moral Impurity; for according to the Sentiment of this inspired Writer, it cannot otherwise be.

Javid confesses, that he was shapen in Iniquity, and conceived in Sin (k). He could not intend any Sin of his Parents, in this humble Acknowledgement, for he is bewailing his own Impurity and Guilt, and not the Sins of others. Besides, there is evident Reason to conclude, that he designs inherent Sinsulness and Disorder; because he immediately subjoyns, as the Opposite of it: Behold thou designs, his Intention must be to express that moral inherent Impurity, that is contrary to Truth or Holiness of Heart, which God requires.

4. This Point is clearly expressed by our Saviour in these Words: That which is born of the Flesh is Flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit (1). That which is produced by the divine Spirit in Regeneration, is of a hely Nature; and by all just Rules of Interpretation, its Opposite must be understood of the contrary to it, viz. corrupt and impure Principles in the Heart. And, therefore, it is a forced Interpretation, to understand our

Lord

<sup>(</sup>k) Pfal. li. 5.

Lord of bodily Weakness and Disorder, or of our Subjection to Mortality and Death, in Consequence of our descending from Parents, that are so.

5. Corruption and Depravity is natural to us. We are by Nature Children of Wrath ("). We are naturally the Subjects of Enmity against God, and of an Opposition to his Law; and, consequently, we must be born with a moral Taint, or a sinful Impurity must attend us from our Birth.

6. Death, according to the Constitution and Appointment of God in his Law, is the Wages of Sin ("). And, therefore, it is Sin righteoufly charged and imputed by the divine Law, and that only, which subjects us to its Stroke. This is a Principle, which the Apostle maintains and argues upon, in the 5th Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Now, fince Infants are often attended, as foon as they are born, with fore, dreadful, and mortal Difeafes; which, after they have fuffered inexpresfible Agonies, bring them down to the Grave: tho' they have not personally finned, it must be concluded, that they are guilty, in the Eye of the Law, fome other Way; and that they are the Subjects of Depravity and Corruption. If we will not allow this to be true; we must unavoidably grant, that God puts a very great Number of his innocent and pure Creatures, to extreme Torture; and flays them without any Defert. How that can be reconciled with his Goodness

<sup>(</sup>m) Ephes. ii. 3.

<sup>(1)</sup> Rom. vi. 23.

Goodness and Compassion; or how it can possibly consist with his Approbation of Innocence and Purity, is far, very far beyond my Capacity to discern. These Particulars are clearly expressed in Scripture: And I may argue from

Experience.

7. If we are holy until we have corrupted ourselves, by actual Sin, thro' the Influence of the evil Examples of those about us: It is strange, that not one of our Race should preferve his Integrity! But that all Mankind should become sinful and impure. That not a single Man should retain the lovely Image of God, which he brought into the World with him; that every Individual of the human Race, should sin against God and deface his Image, is

very amazing!

And it is still more wonderful, that no Man is able to fay, when he loved God, with his whole Heart, and whole Soul, with all his Might, and with all his Strength! That no Person can declare, at what Time, or by what unlawful Act, he lost the perfect Rectitude of his Nature, and became the unhappy Subject of Imperfection and Vice! If Men were really born pure and uncorrupt; tho' they might all become finful and impure afterwards, thro' the Influence of bad Example and evil Cuftom; that no one should have a Consciousness of his being perfect at any Time, nor when, and how, he became imperfect, is to me most furprizing! And I can't but confider this, as a very frong presumptive Proof of our early Corruption,

Corruption, even from our Birth. However, this is certain, that no Person is the better, nor is in the better State now, for that Rectitude, which some may think all Men are born with; but every Man has lost; tho' none, from Experience, can tell when, or how, they lost it.

IV. I shall now attend to what Mr. Foster delivers on this Subject. He gives us an Account of the Image of God in Man, and takes it upon him to prove, that our Nature still bears or retains that Image. This divine Likeness, in his Opinion, consists in two Things.

1. Mr. Foster expresses himself thus, He (Man) resembles his Creator in his Reason and Understanding; whereby he is capable of making very confiderable Improvements in Knowledge, and of discovering all those Truths, which are necessary to the right Management of his Conduct, and to secure his Perfection and Happiness: In that he is not impelled and determined by mere Instinct, but is capable of considering and examining the Nature and Consequences of Things, and of making a deliberate and wife Choice (°). Upon these Things, I observe, 1. That the Image of God cannot confift in a bare Power of reasoning, nor in a mere natural Freedom of Will to chuse what the Understanding discovers to be good, right and fit; because both these are effential to an intelligent Creature: Unless, therefore, it is concluded, that so long as we continue Men or rational Beings, we I 4 shall

<sup>(°)</sup> Vol. I. of Sermone, page 82.

shall bear the divine Image, that Image cannot confist in those Things. 2. Mr. Foster, I imagine, will find it a difficult Matter to prove, that Men are capable of discovering all those Truths. independent of Revelation, which are necessary to the right Management of their Conduct, and to secure their Perfection and Happiness. Though the Will of Man retains its natural Liberty of chufing and refufing, yet as his Mind is the Subject of finful Habits, it is inclined to Evil and averse to Good; he, therefore, voluntarily chuses the former, and freely refuses the latter, under the Influence of those Habits. But he is not free to chuse Good and refuse Evil; because his corrupt Habits give a

wrong Direction to his Will.

2. Says he, The Image of God in Man has a Respect, farther, to the moral Rectitude in which he was created. The rational Principle within him strongly directed to all the Duties of Piety; to the Practice of Justice, and the Exercise of Benevolence .- And as to his Pasfions, they were all in a regular State, and subject to the Government of Reason; which was capable of keeping them within their froper Bounds; that they might not, at any Time be extravagant and disorderly. This was the first happy State of Man (P). I answer, Man in his original State, had a complete Knowledge of his Duty, in all the Branches of it, towards God, towards himfelf, and towards his Fellow-Creature. And he had no Difinclination to it, he approved of it, as commanded by God, and as he faw it

it to be right and fit in itself. Besides, he had full Power to perform it. For, God did not exceed in his Commands the Ability, which he gave to his Creature, Man. And, therefore, there was more in Man, than the bare Direction of his Understanding to act what he faw to be right and fit, viz. a Disposition to practife it. The Task Mr. Foster has imposed upon himself, is, to prove, that we are in such a State now. That Man has a perfect Knowledge of his Duty.—That he has no Aversion to any Branch of it; but that he is at prefent the Subject of a Disposition to it, in its full Extent.—And, that we are possessed of sufficient Power to discharge our Duty perfectly, and without any Interruption in our Obedience. If these are not the Things he undertakes the Proof of, he means nothing, nor will prove any Thing to the Purpose by all his Reafoning; for if each of these Particulars is not proved, no Proof will be given, that Man still retains the Image of his Maker, because every one of these Things is effential to that divine Likeness, which Man in his primitive State was the happy Subject of.

Mr. Foster, in order to prove this extraordinary Doctrine, produces those Words of Solomon: God hath made Man upright; but they have sought out many Inventions (a.) Which Text relates to our first Parents, in their Creation-State, who were called with or Man, as the Word is translated in this Scripture.

Male

<sup>(9)</sup> Eccles. vii. 29.

Male and Female created be them, and called their Name אראם or Man ('), as it is rendered here. Solomon having took a View of the universal Corruption of human Nature; he looks back to the incorrupt State of Man, and pronounces him perfect in his Creation, or he attributes Uprightness and Perfection to him, in that State, not in his present State. Yet it is freely allowed, that the Mind of Man, when it is created and infused into his Body, is free from evil Habits; but it will never be proved, that it does not become the Subject of Diforder and Impurity in his Conception and Which must be demonstrated, or else, all that this Gentleman fays, will stand for nothing. I suppose, that he is not able to produce any other Scripture, in Favour of his Opinion, than that before-mentioned, because he refers us to no other, for the Confirmation of the Point, and that bears no Relation to it. This Sentiment therefore, is destitute of Scriptural Proof, and, consequently, if it is ever proved, it must be from Reason and Experience. He does not fo much as fuggest, that it is capable of Proof from Experience. Reafon plainly dictates, that the Mind of Man, fince it is immediately created and infused of God, the Father of Spirits, (for of the Traduction of Souls, I cannot be perfuaded) it must in its Infusion, be entirely free from any finful Taint; because a holy God cannot create any Thing impure: But Reason will never prove,

prove, that upon its Union with the Body, it does not become the Subject of Depravity. And as to Experience, that can give us no Affurance of our Minds retaining the Image of For, we have no Consciousness of having been perfect at any Time, nor how, nor when, we became imperfect and inclined to Evil. We know not the Point of Time, when we were not disposed to Impatience, Pride, Anger, Envy, Malice, and Revenge, and therefore, Experience is so far from furnishing us, with a Proof of the Purity and Perfection of our Nature, that if we were to attend to that only, we might conclude, that human Nature, was never free from those and other Vices, to which, we perceive ourselves inclined, as foon as we understand any Thing.

The Method which this Author proceeds to take to prove, that Men are still in the divine Likeness, is this. 1. Says he, Mankind are reasonable Creatures.—The Reason of Mankind is able in all important Instances to distinguish between Right and Wrong (\*). Answer, Man will always be a reasonable Creature; but, I suppose, that Mr. Foster don't think, that all Men will eternally bear the Image of God. The most profligate and dissolute among Mankind are rational Beings, we can't number them with Brutes; but surely the Blasphemer of the holy Name of God is not like him. All the Apostate Spirits or Devils in Hell are

reasonable Creatures; but they are not like to God. If Intelligence is the Likeness of God. neither Men nor Devils will ever be unlike him, for they will eternally continue intelligent; if not, they will cease to be Men and Devils. I add. Men are not now perfectly ac. quainted with their Duty. Man in his original State had a complete Knowledge of it. We allow, that Men are able to diftinguish between what is right and wrong in many Instances, and we know, that they always will be fo, otherwife, they cannot have a Consciousness of Sin, nor can their Thoughts accuse them, but upon a Conviction, that they have done as they ought not to have done. And we are confident, that the Devil is capable of judging what is right and what is wrong. He, who fuffers Punishment for rebelling against God, cannot possibly think, that Rebellion against the universal Sovereign is right and fit, though he continues to rebel against him. We dare not fay, we cannot admit the Thought, that the Devil is like to God, though he knows what is fit and what is unfit. Neither can we be perfuaded, that Men, who fin against God, bear his Image, although they can difcern what is right and what is wrong, in various Instances.

2. In order to prove, that Men still retain the Image of God, with respect to moral Rectitude, he observes, that they have understanding to direct the Impulses and Affections of their animal

animal Nature (1). And pray, Sir, have not all Men? Have not the most wicked Persons on Earth this Understanding? - Will you therefore fay, that they are like to God and bear his Image. You must be very hardy, stupid, and impious against your Maker, if you shall express this, or so much as once think it. And, to form just Notions of Happiness ("). A Man may know that Sin will render him unhappy, or worthy of Death, and yet like it, and have Pleasure in it, not indeed, under the formal Notion of Sin; nor as attended with evil Consequences; but as it is agreeable to his vitiated and corrupt Taste. There be many Men, who are not destitute of this Understanding, that are Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God. I ask you, Sir, if they retain his Image with Respect to moral Rectitude, if you shall fay they do, you must maintain what is horrid to express, viz. that moral Turpitude, which is the Opposite of moral Rectitude, is-I will not name it; you know what I mean .- That having a Principle of Reason and Liberty, they must be capable of knowing, loving, serving their Creator (\*). Suppose all this were true, it would not prove the Principle contended for. Without an actual Disposition to love and obey God, Men cannot justly be thought to retain his Likeness. The divine Image supposes not only a Power to love and obey our Maker, but a real Inclination to obey him. Again, though Men

<sup>()</sup> Fage 86.

Men have a Principle of Reason, Reason in Man is now imperfect: And though they have a natural Liberty of chusing and refusing, which can never be loft, they are under the Influence of finful Habits, which incapacitates them to chuse Good, and causes them to chuse Evil. They have not a perfect Knowledge of God: I do not mean, Ideas of him adequate to his Perfections, fuch a Knowledge of God. no Creature ever had, nor can have; but I intend fuch a Knowledge of God, as is fufficient to influence them to adore and reverence him, as they ought to reverence and adore their Creator, Preserver, and most bountiful Benefactor. Farther, they will always have this Principle of Reason and natural Liberty; but many of them, it must be confessed, will not always be in the Image of God. Once more, the Devil, himself, hath a Principle of Reafon, or he is a thinking Power, and he also hath a natural Liberty, for his free Agency is not lost: Is he therefore, in the Image of God? Sure Mr. Foster can never think he is. The divine Likeness cannot confist in what Man can never be deprived of: Man can never loofe a Principle of Reason and a natural Freedom of Choice; neither can the Devil, and, consequently, the Devil and Man may have lost the divine Image, though both possess a Principle of Reason, and still continue free Agents. -Of governing the animal Passions, and keeping them within their proper Bounds, and controuling them when they grow licentious and extra-

extravagant (1). The animal Paffions or fenfitive Lusts of Men, would not be criminal, if Reason was not placed in Man, to direct and check the Motions of his fleshly Appetite. Since it is, those Passions would never have been tumultuous and disorderly, if Reason had always duly discharged its Office, if it had never given fome unwarrantable Licence to them. In any Instance, wherein those Passions are licentious and extravagant, Reason has failed of its Duty and a Man is involved in Guilt. Mr. Foster adds, reasonable Nature has no evil Tendency, but directs to the Pursuit of Wisdom and Virtue, and to suppress all corrupt Desires (2). Reasonable Nature may be corrupted, that cannot be denied, when it is depraved and corrupt it is reasonable, if it is not, it is certain that Devils and wicked Men are irrational Beings, which neither are. Again, corrupt Habits in the Mind have an evil Tendency, if they have not, there is nothing in Devils, nor in any Man, that tends to Evil. Besides, corrupt Desires cannot arise in any reasonable Being, without Guilt and defiling the Subject of them. Vicious Defires stain the Mind and render it guilty, how foon foever they are suppressed, though not to the same Degree, as when they are cherished and gratified. And, therefore, that reasonable Nature, wherein they spring up, can no longer, justly be esteemed innocent, and retaining the Image of God. I am sensible, that some Men think, that vain Thoughts, and

<sup>()</sup> Ibid.

the first Motions in the Heart towards Evil. are excusable, because they find them unavoid. able; but there is nothing, which my Soul more abbors, than this abominable Conceit. He asks, is it not agreeable to human Nature to reverence the great Author and Governor of the World, and secure his Protection and Favour on whom we absolutely depend, by an Imitation of his Perfections, and Obedience to his Commands(2). If Mr. Foster means, that our Reason will determine, that it is just, wife, and fit, fo to do, upon due Examination, it is true, and fo will the Reason of Devils. But if he intends; that there is a Disposition in Devils, or in Men naturally, to imitate the Perfections of God and obey his Precepts, he can advance nothing, which is more false. It is one Thing for Reason to discern the Propriety and Fitness of an Action which is good, and another to incline to that Action. The former, Reason, though depraved, is capable of in some Meafure; but it is not the Subject of a Disposition to Purity and Holiness. Does Mr. Foster think, that a reasonable Creature, upon discerning the Wisdom and Advantage of being conformable to the Will of God, and the fad Consequences of the contrary, cannot but chuse, desire, and endeavour after it? If this is his Opinion, he is greatly mistaken. Devil and wicked Men know, that the Part they act, is prejudicial to themselves, and, confequently, that it is foolish. Farther, he asks, Does

does not Nature teach us to be Just and Chari-table, to compassionate the miserable, and relieve the distressed? Are not these Virtues suitable to our strongest Affections and Instincts? And the contrary Vices, by the universal Confent of Mankind, branded as inhuman and monstrous (b)? And what of all that? Does the Knowledge of Duty necessarily suppose a Difposition to practise it? Must Men be absolutely ignorant how they ought to conduct themselves, if it is concluded, that the Image of God is greatly defaced in Man? This is a most impertinent Way of arguing, and confirms not the Point in Hand, in the least Degree. Again, fays he, is it not natural to us to seek and endeavour to promote our own Happiness, and, consequently, to mortify all those evil Appetites, which are the Sources of Corruption and Misery (°)? Men would not be miserable or suffer Punishment; but yet they freely chuse the Evil of Sin, which subjects them to Pain and Misery .- Besides, that Person, who has any evil Appetites to subdue, is not in the Image of God, he is not such as God made Man. To suppose, that an upright perfect Creature is the Subject of evil Appetites is absurd, that Supposition, might lead us to conclude, that the innocent Jesus had such Appetites. Mr. Foster observes, That our Nature abbors Rebellion against God, preying upon its own Kind, delight in Oppression and Injustice, and in the Misery of our Fellow-Creatures,

<sup>(</sup>b) Ibid.

<sup>( )</sup> Ibid.

tures, and wilful extravagant Defires which fink us below the Condition of Brutes (d). Reafon though corrupted is indeed able to discover the Turpitude of these Things, in some Degree, and certainly condemns them; but that notwithstanding, it consents to them all. He fays, This is not human Nature but a most dreadful Depravation of it ('). Since this is a Depravation of our Nature, Men, who have ever finned or rebelled against God, they are not in his Image. What is the Amount of this Reasoning? No more than this: That Men have some Sense of their Duty, and of the Danger which attends neglecting to practife it, and acting contrary to it. And, I imagine it is impossible to find a fingle Man, who knows, that he is a Man, viz. a rational Creature, that hath not fuch Convictions in his Mind, relating to Vice and its Confequences, how greedily foever, through the Impetuofity of his Lusts, he may practise it.

After all, he allows, that there is a Sickness and Disorder in our mortal Frame, introduced by the Fall, which, because of their Intimacy, may, in some measure affect the Mind (1). If we are in every Sense innocent, how shall this be reconciled with the Goodness of God, to ordain us to a Union with such a sickly and disordered Body, that proves a Clog upon our reasoning Powers, and strengthens the animal Passions? Temptations without us do not clog nor weaken our intellectual Powers; but this

Sick-

Sickness and Disorder of our mortal Frame do, Mr. Foster grants, and that they give Strength to our animal Passions, which render it difficult to Reason, to keep them in due Order. There is therefore, very great Danger of our Mind being diverted from its Duty, by the Strength and Impetuosity of these disorderly Passions, which are become natural to us, in Consequence of the Fall. It is probable, that the Mind is corrupted at first, by the Disorder of the Body to which it is united, and which is a Clog upon it.

Mr. Foster proceeds to mention the Foundation of our Error, with Respect to these Things, which, he fays, is, either we have taken our Estimate of human Nature from the brutal and sensitive Part of it, and not from the intelligent and moral, and represented to our Minds, as the original State of it, such Dispositions and Habits, as are of our own creating (8). How he will distinguish the evil Appetites of the brutal and fenfitive Part of Man, from the acting and Concurrence of the Mind, in framing of impure Ideas, I cannot tell, to me it feems impossible. This is no better, than a base and sinful Invention to wipe off Abundance of Guilt, which Men Contract. If the Mind frames no unholy Imaginations, if all its Conceptions are pure, if all its Desires are holy, if all its Acts are such as the Law requires, and if it is not the Subject of any unlawful Wish, which is agreeable to the fensitive Part, a Man is innocent; but if on the contrary, the Mind of K 2

a Man frames any impure Image, or any unholy Conception, he is verily guilty in the Sight of God, for, the Thought of Foolishness is Sin. Again, we allow, that the Reason of Man is capable of discovering, in some Meafure, what is his Duty, and that Holiness is commanded by God; but we deny, and he has not proved, nor ever will prove it, that Man naturally is disposed to, and takes Pleasure in Holinefs. Farther, we do not judge of these Things, by the evil Dispositions and Habits of our own creating, but by the Word of God: Yet, we must beg leave to say, that since, we know not the Time, when we were abfolutely free from Sin, and when we had not fined: Since we are wholly infentible of having been at any Time, the Subjects of Perfection, we cannot but conclude, that our Corruption, was early or from our Birth, as the Scriptures tell us. If Mr. Foster should say, that he remembers a Time, when he was perfect and finless, I should be so rudely free, as to tell him, that he is a Liar and the Truth is not in him. He adds, Or else we have understood particular Passages of Scripture, which give the Character of the most profligate and abandoned Sinners, as describing the natural Temper of all Mankind; and strained strong figurative Expressions, which are very frequent in the Eastern Languages to their highest Sense (h). It is certainly the Doctrine of the Scrip ure, that all regenerate Persons were once in a State of Sin and

and Death .- That they were by Nature Children of Wrath, even as others: Whether they were notoriously wicked and profligate in their Conduct or not. We conclude upon the Truth of this not only from what is faid of them before their Regeneration, but also from that Depravity, which they confess themselves to be the Subjects of after it, and which, more than all Things else, occasions them deep Distress and Sorrow. They have confessed, that their Wounds stink and are corrupt, that their Loins are filled with a loathfome Difease (1). That they are as an unclean Thing, and that all their Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags (k). That they are vile. That they are undone and Persons of unclean Lips (1). And, that in many Things they offend (m). That they have not attained to the Resurrection of the Dead, that they are not as yet perfect ("). The Reason why some Men fcorn to make fuch humble Acknowledgments, is not because they excel them in Holiness; (happy would it be for them if they were at all like, not to fay if they equalled those Persons therein) but because they know not the Plague of their Hearts, and because they will not allow that to be Sin, which certainly is Sin, and will be found Sin another Day, to their inevitable Destruction, if the Grace of God prevents not their eternal Ruin, by convincing them of their Vileness, and humbling them for it, before that dreadful Day K 3

<sup>(</sup>i) Pfal. xxxviii. 5-7. (k) Ifa. lxiv. 6. (1) Ibid. vi. 5. (1) James iii. 2. (1) Phil. iii. 12.

overtakes them. I add, the holy Scriptures were penn'd for the Reading and Instruction of other People, besides the Eastern Nations, and therefore, it is reasonable to conclude, that God would not express his Will to Men, in stronger Language, than the Nature of those Subjects, concerning which he speaks, required, lest they should thereby be led into any Mistakes relating to them. This is no other than a foolish Evasion, made use of to obscure that shining Evidence, which is given in the Word of God, of various divine Truths: And it is a tacit Acknowledgment, that if the Language of Scripture is interpreted, in fuch a Sense, as it will really bear, Men must necessarily grant the Truth of fuch Principles, as they are determined to dispute against. Besides, if we do not carry up the Sense of Scripture higher than it will bear, we do not strain it. We only allow it so much Force, as is suitable to the Strength of its Language. While some Men dare to lessen that Force, because they fondly imagine, that its Phrases are too bold and strong to express the true Nature of the Doctrines discoursed of. I subjoin, the Corruption of human Nature is afferted in plain Language, and not in figurative Modes of Speech only, as was before proved, I hope beyond any folid Reply.

#### CHAP. VIII.

#### Of Regeneration.

O Man that is unregenerate is fit for the Enjoyment of God; nor can participate of future Bleffedness. The Sanctification of the Spirit must precede eternal Salvation. Holiness is a Meetness for Glory, and without it no Man shall see the Lord. Persons who are in a State of Unregeneracy, are dead in Sin: Are under the Dominion of it: Are averse to God, and not subject to bis Law. These Things are true of some Men only, or they are true of all. If these Characters belong to some Men only; then, a Part of Mankind have no Need of Regeneration: They are fit for Heaven without any divine Work upon them: And, therefore, it can't be faid of fuch, Except they are born again, they cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. If all Men are dead in Sin, previous to this Work upon them, then every Individual of Mankind needs the Grace of Regeneration. The Words of our Saviour, Except a Man be born again, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God, are indefinite; and will not admit of any Limitation. They clearly and strongly fuggest I 4

fuggest, that every Man must become the Subject of Regeneration, in order to the Fruition of God. This important Point, Mr. Foster takes no Notice of, in treating on the Subject; which is a very great Defect: A Defect it is, that affects the most momentous Branch of this evangelical Truth, on which he discourses: And what is still worse, he gives such a Definition of Regeneration, as will naturally lead us to conclude, upon his Principles, that it is not necessary to some. It is, says he, A Man's fincerely and entirely renouncing the corrupt Sentiments be had before maintained; the irregular Passions he had indulged; and the wicked Practices be had been guilty of (a). Upon his Principles, I think, it may be certainly concluded, that many Men stand in no need of being born again. If a Man has always been fo happy, as not to have embraced the abfurd Doctrines, of the Deity of Christ; the Reality and Perfection of his Satisfaction; Justification by the Imputation of his Righteousness; the distinct Personality, and Deity of the Holy Spirit; and the Necessity, and certain Efficacy of his Operations, upon the Souls of Men: He has no corrupt Principles to renounce. Besides, there are many Persons, who have not indulged irregular Passions; who have always been sober, just and religious in their Conduct. And, confequently, they have not been guilty of wicked Practices. Such Perfons, therefore, have no Need of being born again,

<sup>(</sup>a) Vol. III. of Sermons, page 260.

again, upon his Principles. Men, who have ever been virtuous and moral, in their Behaviour, cannot be the Subjects of this Change. As corrupt as Mankind are in general, there be many, who have kept clear of wicked Practices all their Days. And, therefore, according to this Account of the New-Birth, they cannot be the Subjects of it: And, by Confequence, this Definition of Regeneration, is undoubtedly false. For, there is no Man of whom, it can be truly said, that he may enter into the Kingdom of God, without this di-

vine Work upon him.

Regeneration is the Infusion of holy Principles into the Hearts of Men, viz. Faith, Hope, Love to, and a true Fear of God, which Principles discover themselves, in a holy, spiritual and humble Walk or Conversation. Hence, Christians are said to be the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus. unto good Works (b). Against this Account of Regeneration, he objects various Things; and gives a false Representation of our Opinion in this Matter, viz. That we conclude, that Mankind are purely passive in a Reformation from Vice to Virtue (c). We conclude no such Thing; as he must be sensible, if he has confulted what we have faid on this Subject. And if he has not, he ought to have done it, that he might not have exposed himself in this Manner, to the just Censure of Ignorance, or of what is worse, Unfairness and Disinge-

nuity.

<sup>(</sup>b) Ephef. ii. 10.

<sup>(</sup>c) Page 261.

nuity. What we conclude is, that Men are purely passive in the Infusion of holy Principles into their Hearts: But we always maintain, that they are active, in Consequence of fuch Principles being infused, in reforming from Vice to Virtue. As the Apostles were paffive in receiving an Ability to speak with Tongues; but were active in speaking: We fay, that Men are wholly passive in receiving the Principle of divine Life; but, that they are active in forfaking Sin, and practifing Holinefs: As Lazarus was paffive in the Reception of Life, when he was in the Grave; but was active in coming out of it: So we fay, that Men are entirely passive in the Reception of new, and spiritual Life; but, that they are active in the Exercise of that Life. We contend, that Faith and other Graces are given, and not acquired; but we full well know and always affert, that Men are active in the Exercise of those Graces. Tho' we fay, that Men are passive in the Reception of Power for spiritual Acts; we are not guilty of fuch Nonfense, as to say, that they are inactive, when they exert that Power. Neither is it true, upon our Principles, that Men are mere Machines, and void of Intelligence, and free Volition (4), as this Writer suggests: Man is still an intelligent Creature; and he retains his natural Freedom of Will and Choice, tho' he is corrupt and depraved: Nor does our Opinion suppose the contrary. And yet it is certain, that

<sup>(</sup>d) Page 262.

that Men may become incapable of understanding spiritual Things, and may be the Subjects of a fixed Aversion, to God and his Law; if they are not naturally and univerfally fuch. Notwithstanding that Incapacity to discern heavenly Things, in their true Nature, they are intelligent reasonable Beings; and notwithstanding that fixed Aversion to God, and his Law, they retain their natural Freedom of Will, and they freely chuse what is evil. Free Agency is one Thing, and a Disposition to what is good, is another. The Devil is a free Agent; he has not lost the natural Freedom of his Will; but fince he has no Disposition to what is good, he refuses to chuse it, and he is free in that Refusal. And Men, tho' depraved, are free Agents; but they have naturally a Difinclination to what is spiritually good; and therefore, they refuse to chuse it; and they act freely in that Refusal. And they have a strong Biass to the contrary, and therefore, they chuse it; and act freely in that Choice. The Grace of God in regenerating us, renders us capable of making a wife Choice. and under the Influence of his Grace, fuch a Choice we freely make. It is a gross Mistake, that free Agency necessarily supposes an Ability to chuse Good, and refuse Evil; if it doth, then a reasonable Creature can never be so far corrupted by Sin, but that he will eternally be able to chuse the former, and refuse the latter; tho' left by God, under the Influence of vicious Habits. Devils and damned Spirits may

then chuse Good and refuse Evil; for they are, and ever will continue to be free Agents. Nor do we suppose, that vicious Men are destitute of Power to reform their Conduct. We allow. that they are capable of it, and that they are exhorted to it, as Mr. Foster observes. Reformation of Conduct we don't take to be Regeneration; tho' it certainly attends it. are perfuaded, that a diffolute Person may become regular and virtuous, and yet not be born again. He represents it as ludicrous and trifling, ungenerous and cruel, and infulting, to exhort Men to the Practice of what is not in their Power (c). If, therefore, they cannot love God, with all their Heart, and Soul, and Strength, then, if God requires this perfect Love to himself, of them, he is ludicrous and trifling, cruel and ungenerous, and infulting: Tho' their Incapacity to obey that Command is not from God; but from Man himself: Or it is the Effect of a criminal Behaviour in Man. This, therefore, is not Reasoning, but downright Raving and Madness.

He farther, observes, that it would be abfurd and cruel to threaten Men with Punishment, or promise them a Reward to sly in the Air, or become invisible, or to do any Thing that is beyond the Extent of their natural Powers (f). The Truth of which, I am persuaded, every Man will soon perceive and readily grant: But what is it to the Purpose? Nothing at all. If I could allow myself to be pleasant, I should

treat

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 263.

treat this Impertinence with diverting Ridicule; but the Seriousness of the Subject forbids it. Men are exhorted to reform from Vice, and practife Virtue, which they have a Power to do. But they are not commanded to regenerate themselves. Nor are Promises of eternal Life made to them, upon a Reformation from Vice, which this Writer feems to suppose. If Man ever was the Subject of a fufficient Power to keep the Law of God perfectly, that Power he is still possessed of, or he is not; I suppose it will be granted, that he is not. That Power he lost, in Consequence of Sin, or it was taken from him by his Maker, without any Offence committed on the Part of Man. This is so absurd, that I imagine none will allow it 'can be true. Man's present Inability, therefore, to perform his Duty in a perfect Manner, must be the Effect of Sin on his Part. God in commanding Man to keep his Law, perfectly, requires no more of him, than he furnished him with a Power to do. But he never rendered Man capable of flying in the Air, or becoming invisible: And, confequently, tho' it would be abfurd and cruel, to require him to do either of these Things, it follows not, that it is fo, to enjoyn perfect Holiness on Men, and condemn them for the Want of it, tho' they are now unable to practise it; because their Defect of Power to obey the divine Law, wholly springs from a criminal Behaviour in Man. This Reasoning, therefore, is so impertinent, that nothing can be expressed, expressed, which is more impertinent and tri-

fling.

Mr. Foster proceeds in his Impertinence, (for I cannot call it Reasoning) and says, if Men were entirely passive in the Affair of Regeneration, -- it would then be impossible, that any Man should be regenerated sooner than he is; and, confequently, all his Deviations from the Rule of Right, would be unavoidable and innocent (8). It is true, that no Man could be regenerated fooner than he is; but it is not true, that all his Deviations from the Rule of Right, were unavoidable in his Unregeneracy; for, tho' an unregenerate Person, thro' the Want of a spiritual Principle, cannot spiritually love and obey God, yet he is able to practife Virtue and shun Vice, while in that State; at least, in a far greater Measure than many do. And, tho' Imperfection in Virtue is unavoidable, thro' the Corruption of human Nature, it is not innocent; for, as has been before observed, the Defect of Power, to practife Holiness in the utmost Extent the holy Law of God requires, is owing to Man himself. Besides, there is not only a Defect of Power in Men, to obey the Law perfectly; but there is in them an Aversion to it, and therefore, they are rightly charged by God, in his Word, with Contumacy and Obstinacy, and the most egregious Folly. And their Crimes are justly attributed to free Choice, and wilful Determination. This Writer goes on to argue

<sup>(8)</sup> Page 265.

gue from the Nature of Things, against our

Opinion. And,

1. He concludes, that deplorable and horrid is the Destiny of Men, and very ungracious seems to be the Care and Providence of their Creator, if they cannot know what is their Duty, and wherein their true Happiness consists (h). How does it appear, that God is wanting in Care and Goodness to Men; because human Nature is become, thro' Sin, incapable of understanding perfectly what ought to be practifed, and wherein true Happiness consists? What? Because Man, by his Rebellion against his Maker, has destroyed himself, shall we dare to charge God with a Want of Care and Goodness to him? And if any one of our rebellious Race, shall have the impious Front to exhibit fuch a Charge against the Almighty, shall his bold, and rude, and infolent Conduct be justified, and pass for Reasoning? With Men of Piety, Wisdom and Modesty, I am sure that it never will. To suppose, says he, that a farther supernatural, and inward Illumination is necessary to give a just and right Idea of Scripture Doctrines; is in Effect, to affert, that the Scriptures are of no Use at all; and that the inward Teaching, is the only Revelation of the Mind of God to Mankind (1). Prodigious! Still more Impertinence! The Sense of Revelation may be understood, without an internal and supernatural Illumination; or Men by a due and proper Exercise of Reason upon Reve-

<sup>(</sup>h) Page 267.

<sup>()</sup> Page 267, 268.

lation, may eafily discover the Principles therein expressed. But in order to discern the Importance, Excellence and Glory of those Principles, an internal Illumination is necessary. Yet it can't be faid, that the Scripture is a Revelation, unrevealed; or that the Scriptures are of no Use at all; or that the inward teaching is the only Revelation of the Mind The Scripture is a Discovery of divine Truths; those Truths may be known, as they are revealed in the Word of God, without any fupernatural Illumination of the Mind. This inward Illumination acquaints us in some Measure, with the excellent Nature of those heavenly Truths. This internal Work, informs us not of the Meaning of Scriptural Terms, Phrases, and Expressions; they are understood without it; and, consequently, the Doctrines of the Scripture are understood without that inward Revelation. So that the Bible is not a Revelation, unrevealed: Nor are the Scriptures useless. They are all, and the only Revelation of divine Truths we receive from God. This inward Illumination is not a Discovery of Truths, but of the Glory of Truths; which being clearly revealed, may be known to be Truths without it. If some Men cannot, or will not distinguish between knowing the Truth of evangelical Principles, and understanding the divine Glory of those Principles, we are not answerable for that. We are sure of this; that they are properly distinct in their own Nature. As Men, we know the Truths which

which are revealed in the Scriptures; and as Christians, we discern their excellent Nature, and taste their Sweetness, and derive the highest Consolation from them.

2. Mr. Foster thinks, that Men are able to acquire lively Impressions of religious and moral Truths .- That they can attain an Acquaintance with the intrinsic Excellence of the Christian Religion, and discover its infinite Importance to their present Peace, and everlasting Felicity (\*). It is very confiderable, that the Christian Religion is allowed, to be of infinite Importance to the present Peace, and everlasting Felicity of Men; for this liberal Grant, the Gentleman deserves our Thanks. But it is not of fuch Importance to these great Ends, but that Men might effectually fecure them both without it, as he thinks. It is a Mistake, that Men, are able of themselves, to do the Things expressed above. For they are blind, their Minds are obscured: Their Understanding is darkened, and they are alienated from the Life of God, thro' the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Hearts (1). They are dead in Sin; and have not a Principle of spiritual Life, from which holy and spiritual Acts spring. They are Enemies to God, and not subject to his Law, nor can they so be ("). For there is a fixed Difinclination and Averfion in them to pure and spiritual Religion: And until a contrary Disposition is wrought in them, they will not be inclined to that Spirituality

<sup>(1)</sup> Page 268, 269. (1) Eph. iv. 18. (m) Rom. viii. 7.

lity and Holiness, the Law requires of them. Add to these Things, they are under the Dominion of Sin, that bears Sway in their Hearts. even in the Hearts of those, who are virtuous and moral in their Behaviour, until the Work of Regeneration is wrought in them. He obferves, that the strongest Disinclination does by no means infer an utter Impossibility. And urges, that Man must still be a free Agent, and have it in his Power to be either virtuous or vicious; or else be is absolutely incapable of Religion, and moral Government ("). I answer, Men may reform from Vice, and become virtuous, without Regeneration: There be many virtuous Persons, who are not regenerate. Again, unregenerate Men freely chuse, what is displeasing to God, thro' the Corruption of their Hearts, and the evil Biass of their Will. Besides, this Manner of Reasoning, feems to suppose, that Power to practise Holiness, and avoid Sin, is essential to an intelligent Creature, and can never be loft, thro' any Cause at all, which is certainly false. Reasonable Creatures will eternally be the Subjects of moral Government: And it will always be their Duty, to love, adore, and obey God; and it will be their Sin, not to love, adore, and obey him: But this infers not, that they will eternally have a fufficient Power to enable them to put forth these Acts. It is now the Duty of Men to practife Holiness perfectly; but they have not Ability equal to it; and yet

<sup>(</sup>º) Page 269.

it follows not, that their Defects and Sins are involuntary. The Will of Man freely chuses what is evil, and freely refuses what is good,

as it is vitiated and corrupted by Sin.

3. Every other Difinclination, fays he, may be conquered, and every other wrong Habit; but what is of a religious Nature, may be reformed, and that therefore, those also may (°). But how does that appear? Other Difinclinations, and other wrong Habits, that are not of a religious Nature, they are not criminal, nor are they the Effects of a criminal Behaviour in human Nature. These Habits, whatever may be intended by them, fince they relate not to Religion, they are not any finful Taint of the Mind: The Vitiofity, therefore, of Men, does not incapacitate them to conquer those Difinclinations, and reform those Habits. But such wrong Habits, as relate to Religion and Holiness; they are the moral Taint and Depravity of the Mind; and they render that incapable of difcerning the Excellency of heavenly Things; and influence the Will to refuse them, and to prefer carnal Delights to them. It is no Difbonour to Christianity, that Men cannot discern its intrinsic Excellence (P), tho' this Gentleman takes it upon him to fay it is. For, as the Sun is not less glorious, because blind Men cannot see it; neither is the Gospel, because fome Men discern not its amazing Lustre and Glory. And fince Man has by Sin rendered L 2 himfelf

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 269, 270.

<sup>(</sup>P) Page 269.

himself impotent, it is not injurious to the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of the Deity, that he is so. Nor is it any Advancement of the Glory of the Creator, to affert, that there is at present, a Power in Man to do good; tho' Mr. Foster conceits it is: Because he is not now such as God made him. Some Weakness and Defects he allows do attend human Nature; his Account thereof stands thus. The animal Pasfions of Man are turbulent .- That being a little indulged, they will controul and over-rule the Dictates of Reason.—That an unhappy Constitution of Body, and the various Disorders to which it is subject, are a heavy Clog upon the Mind, and cloud and interrupt the Freedom and Liveliness of its Operations .- That Objects of Sense make powerful Impressions on human Nature; and it every where is surrounded with numerous Temptations to Vice and Irreligion .-That evil Examples often times corrupt it early, &c. (9). On this Account, we may remark as follows. 1. Man would never be the Subject of turbulent Passions, without Guilt on his Part. For it is not reasonable to suppose, that God created him with such irregular and diforderly Passions. The Turbulency of the Passions of human Nature, therefore, is a strong Proof, that Man is not now in the Image of God. 2. Man was not created with an unhappy Constitution of Body. As Reafon will not allow us to imagine, that the Mind of Man, in his Creation, was the Subject

<sup>(4)</sup> Page 271, 272.

ject of Ignorance and Vice; neither will it permit us to conceit, that his Body was formed with an unhappy Constitution, and various Diforders attending it. And, of Courfe, the Unhappiness of the Constitution, and the Diforders of the Body, must be purely, the Effects of Sin in Man. 3. He limits the Depravity of human Nature, to the inferior Part of it, the Body. Is there then no Ignorance in the Mind, or Incapacity to discern the excelling Glory of divine Things? Is there no Hardness of Heart? Is that as susceptible of heavenly Impressions, as it ever was? Do no other ill Effects follow upon Man's Rebellion against his Creator, than such, as the Body is the Subject of? So this Author feems to apprehend; but it is an Imagination most remote from Truth. The holy Scripture reprefents the Mind of Man, as blind, and ignorant, and covered with Darkness: His Will as stubborn and perverse: His Heart as hard: That reprefents him as dead in Sin: As under the Dominion of it: As averfe to God and his Law: As disposed to finful Pleasures. And. it affures us, that Men cannot discern spiritual Things; that they cannot be subject to the Law of God; that they cannot come to Christ; or believe in him. We must therefore conclude, that the present Weakness of human Nature confifts in the Disorder and Incapacity of the Mind, as well as in the Irregularity and Turbulency of the animal Paffions. There are Lusts of the Mind, as well as Lusts of the Flesh; i. e. the sensitive Part: Pride, Covetousness, Envy, Anger, Malice, Revenge, and the like. And, I am consident, that no Man can say with Truth, that he remembers a Time, when his Mind was free from any one of those devilish Lusts. Men may sooth and stater themselves, as much as they please, and dress up human Nature, as sine as they can; but the Truth is, we are the Subjects of diabolical, as well as of brutish Lusts; and the former discover themselves to have taken Place in us, as soon as the latter.

The Author, from his own Account of the Inability of human Nature, grants, that the Doctrine of divine Assistances may be admit-With Respect to these heavenly Asted (1). fistances, I would ask, whether they are afforded to every Man, as well to Indians, and barbarous People, as to those who are civilized, and nominally Christians? Whether any farther Knowledge of good, is conveyed to the human Mind, by those divine Aids, than Men of themselves are able to acquire? And, whether these Influences from Heaven, produce in Men, Faith, Hope, and Love to God, or not? If they do, then all Men, allowing that all are favoured with those gracious Influences, must be the Subjects of those divine Principles, or heavenly Graces; and, confequently, they must be thought to perform Services acceptable to God. If they do not give Being to those

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Page 272.

those gracious Habits in the Hearts of Men, then it necessarily follows, that Men who are destitute of Faith and Hope in, and Love to God, may please him, if these Aids are sufficient to enable them, to perform Duties in a Manner acceptable to the great Sovereign of Heaven and Earth, tho' those Graces are not wrought in their Souls. 1. It is certain, that all Men are not the Subjects of these spiritual Principles: For all Men have not Faith. That Faith which purifieth the Heart (5): Which good Works attend: And which worketh by Love ('). 2. Without those Graces Men cannot ferve God acceptably. Without Faith it is impossible to please God ("): Without that Faith, which is the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen. For that is the Faith, which the inspired Writer discourses of, in that Place. 3. Hence, it follows, that these supposed Aids, which Mr. Foster grants, are afforded to Men, leave them under an Impossibility of Salvation; because they do not render them capable of acting a Part, acceptable and pleasing to God. Either these Assistances bring Men out of the Flesh, into a State of Regeneracy, or they do not. If they do, then upon a Supposition, that they are afforded to all Men; we must conclude, that no Man is in the Flesh, or in an unregenerate State, that all Men, at one Time or other, are made meet to be Partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light. This we certainly know L 4

<sup>(°)</sup> Acts xv. 9. (°) Gal. v. 6. (°) Heb. xi. 6.

is false. If these Influences do not bring Men out of the Flesh, into a regenerate State; then, unless those who are in the Flesh, may please God, and are fit for Heaven; notwithstanding these divine Aids, Men cannot please their Maker, nor obtain future Felicity. The Holy Scripture positively afferts, that such cannot please God, nor enter into his Kingdom (x). And, I am resolutely determined to believe, what the facred Scriptures affirm, let who will affert the contrary. When Mr. Foster observes, that Men are commanded to create in themselves a new Heart, he must refer to Exekiel xviii. But the new Heart there meant, is no other than what was required of the People of Israel, in order to the peaceable Enjoyment of their civil and religious Privileges in the Land of Canaan: And not fuch a Heart as is necessary to the Fruition of eternal Life in Heaven, which is fo plain a Matter, that it can scarcely escape the Observation of a common Reader, and therefore, it is nothing at all to his Purpose. And the Command given to the Ephefians to awake from the dead, intends not, arifing from a State of Death in Sin, for they were not in fuch a State; being already quickned by divine Grace; but from dead Frames, and dead Works, and dead Companions, which true Saints, are too apt to fall into, and to practife, and to converse with. This Text therefore, neither militates with our Opinion, nor supports the Authors.

This

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Rom. viii. 9. John iii. 5.

This Writer objects very much to an Inference, which we draw from the Metaphor, viz. That the new Birth is not gradual, but instantaneous like the natural. I would, in Candour, fays he, suppose that the Meaning here is, that the first Principle of Spiritual Life, is communicated all at once (v). It is an Instance of Disingenuity in this Person, to fuggest, that the least Degree of Candour is necessary, to suppose, that this is our Meaning, for it is what we always in as explicite a Manner as we can, declare is our Meaning. And we know, that the Nature of the Thing requires it. A Communication of a Principle of Life, must be instantaneous, it can't be gradual. The Growth of that new Life, is not instantaneous but gradual. This fays Mr. Foster, in Conjunction with some other Principles, has a very malignant and fatal Tendency .- For let a Man, a notorious Sinner, (as he will unavoidably if he adheres to this Scheme) fix on that, as the precise Time of his Conversion, when he is most strongly convicted of his Guilt and Misery, with Convulsions of Terror, and Agonies of Despair; and let him also believe, that the once regenerate, are of the Election of Grace, by the unfrustrable Decree of the Almighty, and can never finally perish; however his Regeneration may be dishonoured and obscured, and all the Marks of it suppressed, by enormous and capital Vices; that he may notwithstanding, with St. Paul, (whom he supposes to represent his own real

<sup>(</sup>y) Page 273.

Character) be carnal and fold under Sin, and brought into Captivity to the Law of Sin, which is in his Members: Let him, I fay, confound and jumble all these Errors together, in a Kind of Connection of religious Principles; and Conversion may be without Purity, Religion without Godliness, Christianity without Virtue .- Neither the Thunder of the Law, nor the Grace of the Gospel, may be capable of making Impression upon his Mind; but he may be ruined for ever confidently affured of his own Salvation (2). Mr. Foster, in this Paragraph, has put a most frightful Vizor on various Evangelical Truths; which hides their lovely Features, and charming Complexion, in order to excite Horror and Dread in the Minds of those, who shall look upon this terrible Mask, and not discover the beautiful Nature of the Truths, hid under this shocking Form, wherein he represents them. As the most agreeable Countenance in the World may be covered with a hideous Appearance, and lose none of its Beauties thereby; fo these divine Truths sustain no Loss at all, in their attractive and delightful Charms, by that horrible Dress wherein they are here represented. He has given a very mistaken Account of Conversion; he has misrepresented our Opinion of the Doctrine of Election; and drawn fuch Confequences from it, as are unnatural, and constantly denied by us; he has dreadfully mifrepresented our Apprehensions of the Meaning of

<sup>(2)</sup> Page 273, 274.

of the Apostle Paul, in the viith chap. of Romans: And infers such Conclusions, as he knew would effectually expose our Sentiments of Regeneration, Election, and of the final Happiness of Believers, to the highest Degree of Contempt, with the credulous and unwary Reader, who takes Things upon Trust from But these sacred Truths, will not, I am persuaded, be at all the less regarded, by any impartial and discerning Person, thro' the difingenuous and unfair Representation, which he hath given of them. A few Observations will fully vindicate these divine Principles from that Reproach here cast on them, and discover the Unfairness of the Author in endeavouring to raise the Indignation of all sober and virtuous Persons, against those Truths, which doubtless was his Intention, in this romantic Discourse.

is the Infusion of holy Principles, into the Hearts of Men; and that they in Consequence of such Principles being insused into them, are greatly concerned for their Sins; and on Account of the Impurity of their Nature; and earnestly desire to be holy in all Manner of Conversation, as well as trust in Christ for Pardon, Peace, Acceptance with God, and the Fruition of eternal Life. Convulsions of Terror, and Agonies of Despair, we don't take to be Regeneration; for we know, that unregenerate Persons are sometimes the Subjects of such Convulsions and Agonies. 2. We always declare.

declare, that upon the Implantation of this divine Life in the Heart, an Abhorrence of Sin, and Indignation against it, and strong Defires to forfake it, and to have it eradicated out of the Mind, are produced and cherished. We ever affert, that by Regeneration, a Person is disposed and determined, as God shall affist him, by his good Spirit, to deny himself, obey the Law, honour God, and glorify a Redeemer, whom he makes the Object of his entire Hope and Trust, for Holiness here, and complete Happiness hereafter. at all Times declare it, as our firm Opinion, that those who are chosen to eternal Salvation, are chosen to Holiness, or the Sanctification of the Spirit, and that, therefore, those who are not the Subjects of his fanctifying Operations, have no Foundation to believe, that they are Objects of the gracious Decree of Election. 5. It is false, that we conclude, upon the Safety and Salvation of those, who are guilty of enormous and capital Vices, without true and thorough Repentance for those Sins, and a forsaking of them; and we suppose, that such true Penitents, in Mr. Foster's Opinion, will find Mercy with God. 6. We are perfuaded, that the Apostle Paul in the viith chap. of his Epistle to the Romans, represents his own real Character, as a Christian; but we deny, that he there treats of external Acts, either of Sin or Holiness. He only discourses of the inward Disposition and Acts of his Mind, as he found himself to be the Subject of a Law of Sin, and

and a Law of Holiness: Or of the unregenerate and the regenerate Part in his Soul; and of the contrary Actings of these opposite Principles within himself. We contend, that according to the unregenerate Part, he was carnal and fold under Sin, and that according to the regenerate Part, he was spiritual, holy, and free from Sin.—That the depraved Part never confented to Good, and that the spiritual Part never concurred in the finful Motions of his Heart. Which Things are perfectly confiftent with his holy Zeal, for the Honour of God, with his strict, humble, and spiritual Conversation, in the Church of God, and in the World. 7. And, therefore, not the least Countenance or Support is afforded to the wretched Conclusion, Mr. Foster draws from our Interpretation of that Place, in Connection with our Sentiments of Regeneration, Election, and the final Happiness of the Saints, viz. That Conversion may be without Purity, Religion without Godliness, Christianity without Virtue. As these are Consequences we deny, so they are foreign and contrary to the genuine Nature of the Principles we embrace and maintain. If he was capable of proving, that we interpret that Place, in fuch a Manner, as it might be concluded, that we imagine a regenerate Person may live in Sin, be enslaved to Lust, and regardless of Piety and Holiness, he might infer as he does; but this is what he cannot do, I am confident, and therefore, his Conclusion, which was intended to bring an Odium Odium on our Principles, justly exposes himfelf to Contempt; as a most unfair and prejudiced Opponent, determined to fay any Thing, to the Disadvantage of Doctrines, which are unfuitable to his own Taste. 8. It is most false, that we fo much as in the least Degree suggest, that Persons immoral and vicious, may be asfured of Salvation; nor do our Principles at Holiness we firmly believe, all suppose it. and always affert it, as a most facred Truth, is necessary to Happiness: And tho' we are perfuaded, that the Apostle in the Place beforementioned, speaks of himself, as a Christian, we deny, (and this Writer will never be able to prove it) that he there intends a Prevalency of Sin, over the Influence of Grace, in his Life. And, therefore, it was an unrighteous Thing in this Gentleman, to charge us with maintaining fuch horrid Sentiments. has no better Holiness, or greater Regard to Truth, than he has discovered in the Manner of his reasoning here; I am free to tell him it will never recommend him to God, nor good Men, nor fit him for a better World. he has been thus rudely free, in charging us in the worst Manner he could; he tells his Reader, that he chuses not to insist on this Topic (a). Has he not faid enough, to answer his base End with all credulous and unwary Readers, who take Things upon Trust? Could he express more than he has been pleased to fay, to the Prejudice of the precious Truths of the

<sup>(</sup>a) Page 275.

the Gospel? I think he could not. Perhaps he might have some Degree of Consciousness, that he had already said more than he was able to prove, and for that Reason sinished this romantic Way of speaking. 'Tis strange, that some Men can't be Advocates for Holiness, and good Works, without falling into many evil Works; but that I have observed is true in several Instances. They have pleaded the Cause of Holiness, with Lying; and under the Instance of Pride, Envy, Malice, Revenge, and other base Lusts.

After this Discourse of Regeneration, he proceeds to treat of Enthusiasm; and proposes to distinguish it from true Religion. There is, fays he, no Enthusiasm at all, in believing, that God maintains a Communication with the human Mind; and in a Way of calm Illumination, fuited to its original Faculties, affifts it in the Reformation of evil Habits, Supports it under critical Emergencies; and co-operating with its own Endeavours, establishes good Resolutions, and facilitates its Practice in Virtue (b). I beg leave to ask, whether this Illumination is necessary to enable us to understand what we ought to believe, and what we ought to practife, as Christians? If this is granted, then it will undeniably follow, that the Mind of Man, cannot of itself acquire the Knowledge of Things necessary to be believed, and practifed: And if it cannot, then the human

<sup>(</sup>b) Page 281.

Mind must be impaired, and it is not in the same State it once was. Again, Does this Illumination actually render us capable of understanding the Nature heavenly of Truths? Or does this enlightening Influence upon our Minds, really raise such Ideas of divine Things in us, as we could not form without it? If this is allowed, then I would ask, whether this Illumination takes Place in the Mind, at any particular determinate Time? Or whether it is always afforded to Men; and if there is no Point of Time, wherein they did not enjoy it? If it shall be said, that at fome particular Time, this great and necessary Help, to enable Men to know and practife their Duty, is given to them; then we must conclude, that no Man could be regenerated before that Time; and therefore, according to the Principles and Reasoning of this Writer, Men's Deviations from the Rule of Right, must be unavoidable and innocent. faid, that this Illumination is constantly afforded, or that it hath always been enjoyed by Men; then they have ever had Ideas of heavenly Truths, and the Knowledge of their Duty, as Christians, which is certainly false.

But when, adds he, particular Thoughts, Impulses, and inward Impressions, are directly ascribed to a divine Inspiration and Energy, then Enthusiasm commences (°). Answ. If the particular Thoughts intended, are concerning religious

<sup>(</sup>c) Page 282.

ligious Principles and Duties; why may they not be ascribed to that Illumination of the Mind, the Author speaks of, without a Charge of Enthusiasm? Does this Illumination raise no particular Ideas of God and Religion in the Soul? If it doth not, what is the Use of it? Is this Illumination a Conveyance of Light to the Understanding of a Man, at some one particular Time? And always after that Moment, is a Man entirely left to himself, without God's maintaining any Communication with his Mind, to think, or not to think, of the divine Being, and religious Matters, just as he shall chuse? If it is so, then there is only one fingle Moment, wherein God condescends to affift his Creature Man, in Relation to the Knowledge and Practice of his Duty. Again, If the Impulses, and inward Impressions mentioned, are of a religious and holy Nature; to what Being must we ascribe them? Surely to God, who fanctifies our Hearts, and makes us meet for Heaven.

Mr. Foster farther says, The Enthusiast is wrought up to a strong Imagination, that at certain Times he actually feels God within him; and by this Delusion, he is oftentimes hurried on to very false and dangerous Methods of Conduct (4). I freely grant, that all Impulses and Impressions on the Minds of Men, by which they are misguided, or influenced to act an unbecoming Part, can never be from God; and that it is direct Enthusiasm to conceit.

<sup>(4)</sup> Page 282, 283.

ceit, that they are from him. But, if a Man is excited to what is his Duty; if his Mind is. at certain Times, impressed with a deep Sense of the Importance of divine Things; if he is the Subject of great Sorrow for Sin; if his Mind is, in an extraordinary Manner, affected with the Grace and Favour of God, manifested in the kind Provision he has made for guilty Creatures; it is not Enthusiasm to ascribe these happy Effects, to a divine Influence upon him. For, that an heavenly Influence, which is productive of fuch good Effects in the Minds of Men, may be expected, and is really afforded to some, may be concluded from the Prayers of good Men, and of the Church of God. David prays, that God would create in him a clean Heart, and that he would renew in bim a right Spirit (c). And he petitions for quickning Grace: Quicken me in thy Righteousness (f). And he begs for Illumination from God: Open thou mine Eyes, that I may behold wondrous Things out of thy Law (8). He beseeches God, to afford him strengthening Aid and Support: Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe (h): The Church intreats, that her beloved would draw her: Draw me, we will run after thee (1). And prays, that God would turn her: Turn thou me, and I shall be turned (k). The Apostle prays for Illumination, in the Behalf of the Ephefians: Making Mention

<sup>(°)</sup> Pfal. li. 10.

<sup>(</sup>g) Ver. xviii.

<sup>(1)</sup> Cant. i. 4.

<sup>(1)</sup> Ibid. cxix. 40.

<sup>(</sup>h) Ver. 117.

<sup>(</sup>k) Jer. xxxi. 18.

Mention of you in my Prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, may give unto you the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him; the Eyes of your Understanding being enlightened (1). And he befeeches God, to fanctify the Theffalonians (m). These various Petitions, with Abundance more that might be mentioned, are clearly expressive of a divine Operation on the Mind, in order to furnish it with heavenly Knowledge, Grace and Holiness. Besides, God has promised to operate on the Hearts of his People. That, they shall be willing in the Day of Christ's Power. That he will take away the stony Heart out of their Flesh, and give them an Heart of Flesh. That he will put bis Spirit within them, and cause them to walk in his Statutes, and keep his Judgments, and do them ("). These Promises are a proper Foundation, whereon we may found our Hopes of receiving fuch gracious Influences, that are productive of the holy and heavenly Effects, above-mentioned; and, therefore, it is not Enthusiasm to think, that such Insluences are enjoyed by fome: Nor is it so in any, who have Experience of the Being of those desirable Effects in themselves, to conclude, that they are happily favoured with those gracious Influences. Moreover, the Necessity of this divine Influence on Men, appears from the Representation given of human Nature, in the holy Scripture. M 2

<sup>(</sup>m) 1 Theff. v. 23.

<sup>(1)</sup> Eph. i. 17, 18. (1) Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27.

We are faid to be without Strength: All are for for whom Christ died (°). Our carnal Mind is Enmity against God, it is not subject to his Law, neither, indeed, can it be (1). We are under the Dominion of Sin (4). Are under the Power of Darkness; yea, we are Darkness itfelf. It is true of all, who are in a regenerate State, that they had their Conversation in Times past, in the Lusts of their Flesh, fulfilling the Defires of the Flesh, and of the Mind; and were by Nature, Children of Wrath, even as others (1), They were Subjects of the Lusts of the Flesh, i.e. the sensitive Part, the Body; and also of the Lusts of the Mind, i.e. the superior, reasonable Part of Man. The Defires of the Mind, in Distinction from the Flesh, were evil and criminal. Unregenerate Men are the Subjects not only of brutal, but also of devilish Lusts. From hence, it may be justly concluded, that an heavenly Influence is absolutely necessary to enlighten, quicken, and fanctify Men; and if such a gracious Operation upon them, is needful to render them holy, in order to the Enjoyment of future Happiness; except we will maintain that the whole human Race are left of God, eternally to perish, we must grant, that such an Influence from above, is afforded to fome, and, confequently, that those who are the Subjects of this gracious Influence, are not guilty of Enthusiasm, in supposing that they enjoy or receive

(r) Eph. ii. 3.

<sup>(°)</sup> Rom. v. 6. (°) Ibid. viii. 7. (4) Ibid. vi. 14.

receive it. I add, Regeneration and Sanctification are constantly ascribed to God: Who were born, not of Blood, nor of the Will of the Flesh, nor of the Will of Man, but of God ('). And you bath he quickened, who were dead in Trespasses and Sins ('). Hath saved us, and called us with an holy Calling ("). We are the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus

unto good Works (\*).

I subjoin, in this Work, there is an Exertion of divine Power: And what is the exceeding Greatness of his Power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty Power; which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead ( ). Since our Regeneration and Sanctification are wholly, and always attributed to God, and they are denied to be of Man: And fince there is an Exertion of divine Power therein; it is not Enthusiasm in those, who are the happy Subjects of Grace and Holiness, to entertain an Opinion of their receiving divine Impulses and Impressions; let fome Men fay what they pleafe. Once more; God has promised, and the Saints have had delightful Experience of Confolation and Joy, upon a Sense of Sin, and of their Sinfulness, and in Temptations, Afflictions, and Trials, for the Gospel's Sake. God is willing that the Heirs of Promise, should have strong. Consolation, who have fled for Refuge, to lay hold

<sup>(5)</sup> John i. 13.

<sup>(&</sup>quot;) 2 Tim. i. 9. (") Eph. i. 19, 20.

<sup>(1)</sup> Eph. ii r.

<sup>(</sup>x) Eph. ii. 10.

bold on the Hope fet before them (\*). And he hath given to the Saints, everlasting Consolation and good Hope thro' Grace (a). They joy in God, thro' the Lord Jesus Christ (b). And glory in Tribulation.—The Love of God being shed abroad in their Hearts (°). Their Fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Fefus Christ (4). They walk in the Light of his Countenance (°). They are the happy Sub-jects of the Joy of his Salvation, and are upheld by his free Spirit ('). God gives to them the Oil of Joy for Mourning, and the Garments of Praise for the Spirit of Heaviness (8). These various Modes of Expression, afford a solid Foundation to conclude, that God graciously condescends to communicate to his People, Comfort under their spiritual Distresses, and that he gives to them lively Hopes of an Interest in his Grace and Favour :- And that it is his Intention to raise them to an exalted State of Blessedness. And, therefore, it is not Enthusiasm in them, to conceive that they receive benign Influences from him. heavenly Raptures are not the airy Flights of a warm Imagination; but folid and fubstantial Joys, produced in their Minds, by a fupernatural Operation on them.

Should it be objected, by this Gentleman, or any other Person, that this divine Operation which

(2) Heb. vi. 17, 18.

(t) Rom. v. 11. (d) 1 John i. 3.

(') Ibid. li. 12.

(') 2 Theff. ii. 16.

(°) Ibid. ver. 3-5.

(°) Pfal. lxxxlx 15.. (<sup>g</sup>) Ifaiah lxi. 3.

which is productive of those Effects, is incomprehenfible; or that it cannot be explained: I would answer, no more can the Impulses, and inward Impressions, and the Illumination, which he allows of, be explained. If God, at any Time, and upon emergent Occasions, maintains a Communication with the human Mind, that Communication is to us, as to the Mode of it, entirely inexplicable; but fuch a Communication cannot be denied, without we will affert, that Men in no Circumstances of Diffress and Difficulty, receive Assistances from Heaven, to comfort, relieve and direct them, in the true Way to Happiness. To affirm which, would enervate all, that the holy Scriptures have faid, concerning the heavenly Aids afforded to Men, in the most distressed and disconsolate Condition. It is not unreasonable to suppose, that such an Influence upon the human Mind, may be. For it is not in the least repugnant to Reason, to conceive that the Father of Spirits, can operate on the Spirits he created. Nor is it an unreasonable Supposition, that the human Mind is capable of being thus wrought upon, in order to furnish its Understanding with better Light, and its Will with a better Difposition, than, in a corrupt State, the Mind of Man is the Subject of, in these and other Powers of it. And, I would observe, that this Influence is easily to be diffinguished from Enthusiasm, by the Effects it produces.

Those Effects, are a Sense of the vile Nature of Sin, and a deep Sorrow for having M 4 finned, finned, and on Account of its Being, and various Workings in the Heart. An Hatred of it, and a holy Indignation against it as Sin: So that no Lust, whatever, is connived at, nor cherished. And this Influence produces Defires to praise and glorify God, for the amazing Goodness, he has discovered in providing for the Welfare of Sinners, who have demerited his awful Displeasure by their criminal Behaviour. It also fills the Soul with an humble spiritual Joy, arising from a Sense of that good Will, Grace and Mercy, which the God of all Grace, shews, exercises, and discovers towards all those who trust in him, thro' the Mediation of Christ. If any are pleased to ridicule these Effects, and pronounce them enthufiaftic, it is not only because they are unhappy Strangers to the Power, which attends real Christianity, and true Piety; but because they are under the Influence of strong Prejudices and Prepoficifions against revealed Truth.

We may now observe what real Enthusiasm

is. And.

1. To imagine, that God reveals any Truths to the Minds of Men, which are not contained in his Word, is Enthusiasm. For no Addition is now to be expected to that Revelation, which we are favoured with; nor is it necessary; that is sufficient of itself. 2. It is Enthusiasm to conceive, that he reveals Truths relating to Salvation, immediately, to the Minds of Men, without his Word; or otherwise than by Means of that. Revelation contains all Truths necessary.

necessary to be believed in order to Happiness. And that is sufficient, as a Rule to guide us, in forming all our religious Sentiments. Hence it follows, that an immediate Revelation of Truths, therein contained, to the Understanding of Men is not wanted; and therefore, it is reasonable to conclude, that an immediate Revelation is not given to any Person whatever. Farther, should any Man pretend to such a Revelation, what Evidence could he be capable of giving, that he is infallibly guided in forming of his Ideas of Truth, which he pretends is made known to him in this extraordinary Manner? None at all. 3. A Persuasion, that we are excited by a divine Impulse to act, what does not appear by the holy Scripture, it is our Duty to do, is downright Enthusiasm, whatever Pretences we may make of enjoying Comfort in it, and receiving Advantage from it. To imagine, that Impulses and Impressions to act besides the Rule of our Practice, in religious Matters, are owing to a divine Influence upon us, is Enthusiasm, doubtless. 4. To conceit, that we are divinely influenced, when we are troubled and oppreffed in our Spirits, and we know not well, on what Account it is, or what is the particular moving Cause of our Distress, is Enthusiasm of a melancholy Kind. For God never makes Impressions on the Minds of Men, but to answer some important and wise Design; no fuch Defign can be answered, by throwing Men into Diffress, without some Cause of that Diffress

Distress appearing to their View. And, therefore, to speak of Terror, and Trouble of Soul without any Mention of the Occasion and Spring of that Trouble, is a most uninstructive Way of speaking, and it can never be of the 5. An Apprehenleast real Use to Christians. fion, that we are under a divine Influence, because we are full of Joy, and a Confidence of being happy, when we know not the Foundation and Spring of that Elevation of Mind. is Enthusiasm. For, God in administring Confolation to the Souls of Men, always prefents to their View fome folid Foundation of Comfort; without that, our Comfort would be groundless, and have nothing to support it; and of Course, it must in that Case, be worth nothing. It is Enthusiasm, unless the holy Scripture in its Promises, or scriptural Truths, are the Source from which our Pleasure arises. And, therefore, when Perfons express Abundance of Joy and Comfort, which, as they fay, they receive from God, and acquaint us not with the Cause from which their pretended spiritual Joys arise; they might as well say not a Word; for all they express relating to those Joys, can never be of the least Benefit to any. Nor can it justly entitle them, to an Interest in our Opinion of their excelling in Religion and Piety: If it doth not raise Jealousies in our Minds, of their pretending to what they have not really experienced. 6. No Impulses, which confound Reason, and throw Persons into Agitations, can reasonably be supposed,

to have God for their Author. He operates effectually upon Men, whenever he is gracioufly pleafed to work on them by his powerful Grace; but his Influences never interrupt the due Exercise of their rational Faculties; on the contrary, they always direct them to act in the best Manner, and to the wifest Purposes. Nor do his fweet Influences raise Convulsions, in the human Frame, and cause Distortions in the Members of our Bodies. His Operations, tho' they are ever efficacious, they are never violent, but always gentle, and put no Force upon Nature, nor cause Men to act, as if they were in a Ferment. For any to conceit, that they are divinely inspired, because they feel unaccountable and unnatural Motions, and because they are strongly excited to diforderly Actions, and which may justly be accounted wild and frantic, is Delusion and Madness, or it is Enthusiasm of the most evident Kind. By these Marks, Enthusiasm may eafily be diffinguished from that divine Work upon the Hearts of Men; which Mr. Foster's Text plainly afferts: The Wind bloweth where it listeth, thou hearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: So is every one that is born of the Spirit (h).

It may not be improper to acquaint the Reader briefly, with the general and genuine Sense of the Words: 'Tis this: The Influences of the holy Spirit upon the Souls of Men,

are

<sup>(</sup>h) John iii. 8.

are compared to Wind: And as that is not under the Direction and Controul of any Creature, fo the divine Spirit works upon whom, at what Time, and in what Manner he pleaseth, and none can obstruct his Operations, or disappoint him of his End in working. As the Wind is to us invifible thro' its Tenuity, tho' we perceive its Being by the Motion, and Sounds, and Effects of it: As we cannot particularly and fully describe how it is produced, nor tell where that vast Body of Air finks, when it fubfides: So we are not able to explain the Manner of the holy Spirit's Influence upon us, tho' we are fenfible of its We know, that the new Creature Effects. exists, by its Actings, tho' we cannot declare the Manner of its Production.

This Gentleman very frequently objects, not only in this Discourse; but also in various other Parts of his Writings, that we extort unnatural Inferences from scriptural Metaphors, and particularly from that used in these Words. But he may be pleased to observe, that without the Use of this or other metaphorical Representations, which are given in the Word of God, concerning this momentous Point, our Opinion may be established: For what we collect from those Representations, is clearly and fully expressed in plain Language. Faith is expresly said to be the Gift of God (1). And, therefore, it is not acquired. Repentance is the Gift of an exalted Saviour: And, confequently, Men do not effect it in themselves. The

<sup>(</sup>i) Eph. ii. 8.

The Grace of Hope is given of God, as well as everlasting Consolation is (k). And, therefore, Men raise not this heavenly Hope in themselves. It is declared, that God reconciles us, who were Enemies to him, and disobedient to his Law: And, consequently, our submissive Disposition to his holy Will, is not of ourselves. It is strongly suggested, that we make not ourselves, to differ from others, and that we have nothing, as Christians, but what we have received (1). And of Course, we must conclude, that it is not of our own Will, that we become holy, humble, and spiritual; but we ought to ascribe it wholly to God, and his gracious Influence upon us. It is explicitely denied, that those, who are born again, are born of the Will of the Flesh, and of the Will of Man: And it is afferted, that they are born of God ("). The necessary Conclusion from which is, that Regeneration is not of the Will and Endeavour of Man, but that it is wholly and folely the Produce of a divine Operation upon us. These are plain Texts, and not figurative Expressions, wherein the whole of what we contend for, is plainly affirmed; and therefore, our Opinion is not only built on Metaphors, and figurative Modes of Speech, but it is expressed in the plainest Language; which fully defends us, in interpreting Scripture-Metaphors relating to this Subject, in the Manner we do; notwithstanding this Gentleman's Exceptions to our Interpretation of fuch Metaphors.

CHAP.

<sup>(</sup>k) 2 Thest. ii. 16. (1) 1 Cor. iv. 7. (m) John i. 13.

#### CHAP. IX.

## God no Respecter of Persons.

O have Respect of Persons, Mr. Foster rightly observes, is generally taken in a judicial Sense. therefore, it is faid, that God is no Respecter of Persons; the Meaning is, that he proceeds in Judgment, according to the strictest Rules of Equity and Justice. Justice and Goodness are not inconsistent: If they were so, he that is just could not be good; or so far as Justice is exercised, Goodness could not exercise itself. Again, if Justice and Goodness are contrary, God cannot be effentially just and good, for contrary Perfections cannot refide in him. Nay, if they are contrary, they cannot both be Perfections; because it is impossible that any Perfection can have its contrary. If therefore, it is equitable and just to punish guilty Creatures, the Infliction of Punishment, cannot be contrary to divine Goodness. soon be evident, that it is not in the least inconfistent with the Goodness of God, to punish Transgressors, so far as their Guilt demerits Penalty. If he should exceed in punishing, the Defert of Sin, he would act contrary both to Justice and Goodness; but this he will

will not, this he cannot do; because he is essentially just, and essentially good: And he can never do a Thing that is contrary to any of his infinite Persections. That it is persectly consistent with divine Justice and Goodness to punish guilty Creatures, the following Conside-

rations, I apprehend, will fully evince.

I. God created Man perfect, and, therefore, it was not a tyrannical and oppreffive Act, to give him a perfect Law, and require him to keep that Law strictly and punctually, in all the Parts of it. God, doubtless, had a right to expect, and demand his Creature, Man, to exert all those Powers, with which he endowed him, to his Honour; and if God had fuch a Right, then, feeing his Powers were complete and perfect, it was no Act of Tyranny and Oppression, to subject him to a perfect Law, and require his Obedience to it. That God made Man upright, Reason suggests, and Revelation assures us. And, therefore, it was just and righteous to insist upon his perfectly obeying a perfect Law.

II. A Breach of that perfect Law, which was given to Man, in his innocent State, according to Equity and Justice, certainly demerited Punishment: Unless we may suppose, that the Creature may offend against God, without losing a Title to his Favour; but that is so absurd, that Reason forbids the Thought. And, consequently, it was not an Instance of Tyranny and Oppression, to threaten Man with Penalty, if he violated that Law, and

actually

actually to inflict it, upon his Failure of Obedience to the Law. If any shall say, that Sin doth not demerit Pain and Misery, according to Equity and Justice, they must necessarily maintain, that Man might commit Evil, with Impunity, and without Danger of becoming obnoxious to the awful Displeasure of his Maker. The Absurdity of which is so very evident, that I imagine, none will care expressly to affert it; how much soever they may be determined to advance, and contend for Principles, which can never be supported without that is allowed to be true.

III. Man's Inability fully to obey a perfect Law, is only, and the certain Consequence of Sin, on his Part. God did not deprive him of a Power, perfectly to love, adore, and ferve him; but the present Incapacity of Men, to love, reverence and obey God, as they ought to do, is the fole Effect of Sin on the Part of Man; which I should think, no Person can doubt of; because it is not only agreeable to Reason, so to conclude; but the contrary Supposition, is evidently repugnant to Reason, and fubverts all natural Religion. therefore, every Man, who is not able to keep the perfect Law of God, must have come under an Imputation of Guilt, prior to his becoming incapable of yielding an abfolutely perfect and unerring Obedience to that perfect Law. And, by Confequence, fince it is confessed, that no Man is capable of performing fuch an exact and perfect Obedience, as the holy

holy Law of God requires; it is certain, that every Individual of the human Race, is chargeable with Sin; and was so, previous to his Incapacity of yielding a perfect Obedience to the divine Law.

IV. It is irrational to think, that Justice requires any Abatement to be made in the Rule of our Duty, fince we have disabled ourselves to practife it, exactly; by acting a criminal Part. If, indeed, God had rendered human Nature impotent, and unable to keep his perfect Law, it would have been unreasonable, fill to infift upon a perfect, and unerring Obedience from Man; because the Rule of Duty prescribed to a Creature; in Equity, it cannot exceed the Ability, which the Lawgiver furnishes the Creature with: But as our present Impotence and Corruption follow upon Offence, on our Part; it is no Act of Tyranny and Oppression in God, our righteous Judge, still to require of us a finless Obedience to his Law; and he may condemn, and righteoufly punish us for the Want of that Obedience; notwithstanding, some Men of bold Spirits, can dare to pronounce this cruel, and ungenerous, and infulting. I am fully fenfible, that this Reafoning will be objected to, upon our Opinion, concerning the Way, wherein human Nature became originally guilty: But I think myself, under no Obligation to defend it, in this Place; because if we are mistaken in that Point, it is, I apprehend, impossible, that we should be mistaken, as to the Grounds N

and Principles, upon which I here reason, viz. That Man was created perfect, and that every Individual of Mankind is legally guilty, or is under a righteous Charge of Sin, before he becomes the Subject of moral Impotence and Weakness. For it is certain, if any Thing is certain, that Man was formed with perfect Powers; and it is equally fo, that no Man without becoming legally guilty, would ever be the Subject of the least Degree of moral Shew me the Person, who may Impotence. justly be defended from all Charge of Sin, and I am fure, that I shall have in my View, a Man free from all moral Weakness, Defect, and Disorder. I am confident, that human Nature, without Guilt, would never have been the Subject of any moral Defect and Impurity: That without the Commission and Imputation of Sin by the Law, no Creature would ever become imperfect and finful. And, therefore, this Reasoning will stand, let Men become guilty in what Way foever; fince they only can become imperfect, in Confequence of becoming guilty, some Way or other, in the Sight of God.

From these Things we must be convinced, that the Principle is salse, upon which Mr. Foster argues, and infers all his Conclusions from, relating to this Subject. It is this: That there is one invariable Rule of Judgment, with Relation to all, suited to the Difference of their Conditions and Characters: And this is the eternal moral Law, and their acting con-

formably

formably to the Light and Advantages, which they severally enjoy (a). The moral Law is perfect, and allows of no moral Defect; if, therefore, Men in their present Circumstances were required to keep that Law strictly and punctually in all the Parts of it, in order to receiving future Rewards, and escaping Condemnation and Death, no Man could be happy hereafter: This the Gentleman is forced to grant; for which Reason, he lays it down, as a necessary Principle, that God will accept Men in Judgment, and reward them for their Obedience, if they act conformably to that Degree of Light, and those Advantages which they feverally enjoy; tho' their Obedience is very far from being fuch, as that holy and perfect Law requires. If this Point is not clearly proved, then he reasons without any Principle at all, and, confequently, his Conclusions must be drawn at random, or without any Foundation to support them. If he demonstrates the Truth of this Principle, then he will prove, that the Characters of guilty and righteous agree to the same Persons, upon the very same Foundation, i. e. their own Behaviour. This he will maintain, when he shall prove, that flat Contradictions are true. Again, he must evince, that God is able to approve of moral Imperfection. Farther, that the holy God might have made Man imperfect: That Justice directs to this Method of excusing Crimes, and rewarding a Creature for an incomplete Obedience:

<sup>(4)</sup> Vol. III. of Sermons, page 13, 14.

Obedience: For if this is not proved, it will unavoidably follow, that God, may in Equity, charge on Men their Offences, and refuse to reward them for their imperfect Services. If this is equitable, then, our Sovereign Judge may determine to condemn Men for the want of a perfect Obedience to his perfect Law, or pardon and fave them, just as feems good to him. And that it is not agreeable to Equity to punish an offending guilty Creature, will never be proved, though the Creature cannot perfectly obey the Law; because no Creature becomes incapable of yielding a complete Obedience, without the Commission, and a Charge of Sin on his Part, as I have before observed. Since the Principle is false, on which the Author reasons and infere, his Reasoning has no Force, nor are his Inferences just.

He, is pleased to affert, that God is partial and acts contrary to Truth and Equity, if he is inaccessible by some of his Creatures, and clement and propitious to others, in like Circumstances (b). Answ. Men are either innocent or guilty. If they are guiltless, it is contrary to Justice to condemn and punish them: But if they are nocent and chargeable with Sin, or moral Defects and Impurity, it is an Act of Justice to inslict Penalty on them: And it is Insolence in any sinful Creature to suggest it is not. Equity in the Insliction of Punishment, relates to the desert of the Person on whom it is inslicted, and to nothing else. If a Manthat is undeserving of Punishment, is punished, it is not just and equitable; but if a

Man's Conduct renders him worthy of Punishment, it is just and equitable to punish him, even though another equally deferving of Punishment is pardoned. The Man who fuffers Penalty, is proceeded towards as Justice directs: The Person whose Offence is pardoned is treated merely on the Foot of unmerited Favour. and Clemency. And that Clemency which is thewn towards him, that is forgiven, destroys not the Equity of the Proceedure towards the Person punished. And it is a senseles irrational Thought, to imagine it does. Hence, we must conclude, that God is just in punishing his offending Creatures; though he is pleafed to pardon and fave, and render happy others, who are equally guilty, with those he punishes. The former are proceeded towards, as Justice directs, in relation to their personal Desert: The latter are acted towards, not according to their Demerit; but merely on the Foundation of undeferved Favour and Clemency. Farther, Mr. Foster concludes, from a Possibility of discovering the Being and some of the Perfections of God, from his Works of Creation, upon the Possibility of Men's recommending themselves, to his Favour by their personal Actions (c). The former of these, the Apostle Paul discourses of, in Acts xiv. ver. 15, 16, 17. and Chap. xvii. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. But of the latter he delivers nothing. That the Eternity. Self-Existence, infinite Power and Wisdom of God, may be known by his Works is certain: For the invisible Things of him, from the N 3 Crea-

Creation of the World, are clearly feen, being understood by the Things, that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead (d). But, that Reason is capable of discovering in what Way God will fave, and render guilty Man happy, hath not yet been proved, nor ever will be. What Force of Reasoning is there, in this Argumentation? God hath given fufficient Evidence of his Being and Perfections, in the furprizing Works of Creation, and Man is able to discern that Evidence?—And it may with Certainty be concluded upon, from our natural Notions of his Justice and Goodness, that he will reward his innocent Creatures; and, therefore, guilty finful Creatures may fecure an Interest in his Favour, and justly expect Happiness from him on the Foundation of their own Acts of Obedience? None at all; no, not the least. What? because we know, that God is pleased with perfect Holiness, may we reasonably conclude, that he can approve of imperfect Virtue? With more Reason we might be affured, that a curious Artist, who views with Pleasure, a finished Piece of Work, which he with much Study and Labour hath wrought, may behold it with the same Delight, when some rude Hand has quite marr'd and spoil'd it. What? because it is possible for Men to acquire some Knowledge of God and Virtue, by the Exercise of their rational Faculties, upon the Works of Creation, is it to be concluded, that they are capable of acquiring

quiring fuch a Degree of Divine Knowledge. and of practifing fo much Virtue, as will interest them in the Approbation of God? If Men have any Acquaintance with the Being and Perfections of their Creator, and any Sense of Virtue, and in any Measure practise it, must they necessarily be accepted with him, their righteous Judge? Surely these are Conclusions drawn at Random; or Inferences, which are not drawn from any folid and established Principle. What if a Man should happen to be brought off of the Practice of the most stupid Idolatry, and of some fordid Lusts, by just and eafy Reasoning, must be become the Object of the Delight of HIM, who is of purer Eyes, than to behold Iniquity? What? If a Man has any Religion at all, must he unavoidably be justified by his Maker, and rewarded with future Felicity; because he has emerged out of a wretched Sink of abominable Idolatry, and left the Practice of the most sottish Lusts? How shall these Things be proved? And if they are not prov'd, Mr. Foster's Reafoning will not stand for any Thing at all; but proved, they never can be.

He, also infers, that as Men will be rewarded hereafter on Account of their personal Actions: So the Reward they shall receive will be proportionable to their Abilities and Improvement. And, that, therefore, the virtuous Heathen, who exceeds Christians in Virtue, will be more amply rewarded, as his Advantages

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were fower and his Improvement greater (1). Whether he thinks, that Socrates will wear a brighter Crown in Heaven, than he expects to be adorned with, who, after his Discourse of the Divine Unity, and the Immortality of the Soul, died like a Fool, I will not pretend to fay. He apprehends, that this Principle is maintained by the Parable of the Talents, which our Saviour delivers, and thinks, that the Heathen is intended, by him, that received one Talent only (f). But he is greatly mistaken. For he that had the one Talent, knew who was to judge him, which the Heathen does not: He is ignorant, that Christ will be the Judge of the quick and dead. Again, the Persons, who received the Talents are called the Servants of the Lord, i. e. Christ: Heathens cannot be fo called, for they have not heard of him, and as they cannot believe in him, of whom they have not heard, neither can they be denominated his Servants. Befides, the Talents are the same specifically; but the Knowledge of the Heathen and that of the profess'd Christian differs specifically; and therefore, the Heathen cannot be defigned by him, who received the one Talent. Farther, these Talents intend not Grace, which is a Meetness for Heaven, in Christians, for that is an active Principle, it is not hid in the Earth, it appears in the Life, and brings forth Fruit to the Glory of God, and can never be lost or taken away. Once more, these Talents defign Gifts, which are fometimes bestowed on Persons,

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 18, 19. (°) Ibid, Mat. xxv. 15.

Persons, who are not regenerate, and, consequently, will not be saved. These Gifts are used to the Honour of Christ by those, who are sanctified through his Grace now, and shall be happy hereaster; but those, who perish, use them not as they ought. Lastly, Christ will do his faithful Servants Honour, in the suture Judgment, by openly declaring their Faithfulness in serving him; but the Reward of eternal Life, they will receive on another Foundation, than their own Services, viz. the Grace of God, and the precious Blood, and the everlasting Righteousness or perfect Obedience of him, who is their dear, and only,

and glorious Redeemer.

The Uses, which Mr. Foster observes, the Doctrine he has advanced fuggests to us are these.—That we, as Sinners, for so he must mean, Can reverence God without Terror (8). Though we are conscious of having sinned against God, in many Instances, we have no Cause to be afraid of his Anger, for since we certainly know, that he will be propitious and clement to some Criminals, if he is not so to us, we may boldly charge him with Partiality, and acting contrary to Equity .- It removes all fuch Opinions concerning the arbitrary Capriciousness of his Rigour and Government, as render him the Object of a superstitious Dread and Aversion (h). It causes us not to be afraid of his righteous Judgment, though we have violated his holy Law. We can take the Courage to appear before his awful Tribunal, to be

<sup>(8)</sup> Page 19. (h) Ibid.

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be tryed and judged by him, notwithstanding, we are fenfible, that he might justly pour out the Vials of his Wrath and Indignation upon us, for our numerous Defects and Miscarriages .- It influences us to think of the State of Men universally with Pleasure ('). That is to fay, it is highly agreeable to us, to think, that Men may transgress the Law of their Maker. without bringing Destruction and Misery upon themselves thereby. On the contrary, a Supposition, that God will not reward (guilty) Men with eternal Felicity, on the Foundation of their personal Actions, will cause us to furvey the World, with a Pity mixed with Horror (k). As we shall exercise Pity towards our Fellow-Creatures, who have ruined themfelves by Sin, we shall think it an horrible Thing, that our Sovereign and righteous Judge, has conflituted and appointed, in his Law, that Death and Misery shall be the Wages of Iniquity. And, by this Gentleman, we must be censured, as ungenerous and illnatured, if we can perfuade ourselves to imagine, that God will not fuffer Men to fin against him with Impunity. But his Censures, I affure him, we nothing value, being influenced by infinitely higher Cousiderations, viz. the Righteousness and just Judgment of God our fupreme Judge, who we know will by no Means clear the guilty; without a proper Provision for the Honour of his Law, and supporting the Rights of his Justice, in doing it. Thefe

<sup>( )</sup> Ibid. (k) Page 20.

These Uses are naturally inferred from the Doctrine Mr. Foster maintains, and they are truly worthy of it. With all intelligent and serious Persons, I doubt not, but those Uses, so justly and naturally drawn from the Principle afferted, they will be sufficient to convince them, that it is certainly false, and necessarily attended with dangerous Consequences.

#### CHAP. X.

God a Sovereign Being.

R. Foster being disposed to discourse of divine Sovereignty, for that Purpose, he made Choice of these Words: Nay, but O Man, who art thou that repliest against God (a)? In his Sermon, he advances such Principles, and militates against them, as no Man, I am persuaded, will ever plead for, and argues in a most impertinent, weak, and inconclusive Manner. According to the Method he proposed to take in treating on his Subject, he first points out some Things, to which the Words of his Text cannot be applied, or which cannot rightly be inferred from them.

I,

1. He fays, we ought not to infer from the Text, that God is a despotic arbitrary Sovereign, whose Will is the only Rule of his Actions (b). Pray, Sir, who fays he is? None that I know of. The Rectitude and Righteousness of his Nature, determines his Will to fix on what is just and righteous: This, I think, is allowed by all, who conceive of him, as a Being who is effentially just and righteous. And, if any can imagine that he is not, they are impious Wretches, not worth contending with: Righteous is the Lord in all his Ways, and holy is he in all his Works (c). He is neceffarily fo, by Reason of the Holiness of his Nature. No Man sure supposes, that God may resolve to deceive, to vex and torment bis innocent Creatures (c): Tho' this Writer is pleased to suggest, that some imagine he may; for that is contrary to his eternal Veracity. Nor to vex and torment them: Because his infinite Goodness will always incline him to accept of and reward Innocence. Neither do any, that I know of, suppose, that God acts without Reason, merely from Humour and arbitrary Pleafure (°). And, therefore, all the ill Confequences, which he draws from that Suppofition, affect the Sentiments of no Mortal living. He makes a hideous Outcry against an Opinion, which no body embraces, with no other Defign, than to impose upon his Hearers

(\*) Ibid.

<sup>()</sup> Vol. I. of Sermons, Edit. 3. Page 104.

<sup>(°)</sup> Pfal. cxlv. 17. (d) Page 105.

and Readers, and make them think, that he feriously reasons, when he egregiously trifles, and solemnly delivers the greatest Impertinence,

which could poffibly be expressed.

2. It can't be inferred from the Text, fays he, that Men are not to enquire into the Reafon of God's Proceedings; or that they are in no Cases, able to judge of the Justice of the Methods of his Providence (f). This is true and modeftly expressed; but the Gentleman quickly exceeds the just Bounds of Modesty, and reafons in the most wild and impertinent Manner, and even contradicts himself. He proceeds in his Discourse thus, God would not have us believe implicitely, that any Thing is just, because he acts it, but only requires of us to approve of it so far as we can reconcile it to the general Rules of Equity and Justice (8). This is a bold Affertion, and far exceeds the Modesty with which he began. 'Tis afterwards corrected and contradicted, when he says, indeed there may be Difficulties, to such imperfect short-fighted Creatures as we are, in judging of particular Actings of Providence, for Want of understanding the entire Scheme that the great Governor of the World is purfuing (h). In all fuch Inflances, we are doubtless obliged to believe, that what God does is equitable and just, because the Judge of all the Earth, cannot but do the Thing that is right; and, consequently, in some Cases, we are obliged to believe the Justice

<sup>(</sup>f) Page 107. (h) Page 110.

<sup>()</sup> Page 107, 108.

Justice and Equity of the divine Conduct, wherein we cannot because of our Impersection and narrow View of Things, difcern that Righteousness and Justice, which we are fure all the Dispensations of Providence are directed by. He charges us with dishonouring the infinite Wisdom of God, by discarding and abandoning our Reason (1). This Charge is false, for we do not discard and abandon our Reason: We attend to its Dictates, and follow its Direction in all Matters, wherein, and fo far as, it is able to guide us. But we are confident, that it is not the Rule, by which we must uttimately be conducted in all our religious Enquiries. Reason is to judge of the Truth of Revelation, and of the Sense of the Language of the Bible; but it is that, and not Reason, by which we must ultimately be conducted in forming our Sentiments on various religious Subjects therein contained, because they are beyond the Verge of Reason. If Men will deny this, they must deny, that Revelation gives us a Discovery of any Truths, which Reason of itself could not bring to Light. Again he fays, that we are over modest, when we represent it (Reason) as blind and erroneous in Cases of the highest Importance (k). There feems to be no Danger of this Gentleman's imitating any in an Excess of Modesty, he is not likely to be guilty of that. Are we too modest in thinking, that our Reason is impaired; that it is not in the same Case it once was ?

was? If this is an Excess of Modesty, let us without blushing affert its Perfection: And, that human Nature is as capable as ever it was, of discerning that Compass of Truth, the great Creator defigned it to an Acquaintance with. Let us not be ashamed to maintain the true Dignity of our Nature, and the real Strength and Clearness of our intellectual Faculties. But if this may justly be esteemed Presumption and Arrogance; then, on the contrary, let us confess the Imperfection of our Knowledge, and own our Incapacity to acquire an Acquaintance with Truths, necessary to be known and believed in order to our Happiness. And yet, we cannot be guilty of so manifest an Absurdity, as to represent our Reason, as knowing no more, and having no more distinct and proper Ideas of the moral Perfections of the Supreme Governor, than the Brutes that are void of Understanding (1); which this Author without the least Regard either to Truth or Modesty, is pleased to fay we do. We know, that it is one Thing to affirm, that our Reason is impaired, and another to affert that we have no Reason or Understanding at all. I do not remember to have read any Author, that coined so many foolish and absurd Notions, and imputed them to others to render them ridiculous, and to make his Readers believe, that he had gained a Conquest, when in Fact, he had no Opponent, as Mr. Foster has invented and palm'd upon us. If we suppose, says he, that God can punish bis Creatures

Creatures for what they cannot help, and yet be clear of the Charge of Injustice, we confound and destroy the necessary Distinction between Good and Evil ("). I apprehend, he means, if we suppose, that God can punish his Creatures for not doing the whole of their Duty, when they are incapable of it. Answ. If their Incapacity was owing to God, and not to themselves, his Conclusion would be just; but fince human Weakness is the Consequence of a criminal Behaviour in Man, it is not fo. And, therefore, the ridiculous Inferences he draws from hence, tho' they may be pleafing to himself, as I suppose, all the Impertinence is, with which his Writings abound, on fuch like Subjects, they are not more abfurd, than they are unnatural and foreign to the Truth we contend for, viz. That it is just with God to punish his Creatures for their Imperfection in Obedience, when they cannot perfectly obey his Law; because their Want of Power to yield a perfect Obedience, is owing to Sin on their Part. Would any Mortal besides Mr. Foster infer from hence, that we can have no Probability what Kind of Behaviour is likely to be pleasing to God, or what Scheme of Religion is most worthy of him. That we cannot be sure, that the best of Men will not be the Objects of his Displeasure, and the worst his peculiar Favourites (1). Is this Reasoning? 'Tis mere Rant and ridiculous Caviling.

He takes Notice of a Phrase, which is commonly used, viz. That the End which God defigns in all his Actions, in the Creation, and providential Government of the World, is his own Glory; and allows, that the Expression itself is capable of a just and rational Sense; but complains of its having been misapplied, and made to signify something distinct from, and even inconfistent with, the Exercise of Justice and Goodness, viz. that every Thing is right, merely because God wills it, and has Power to effect it (°). I am persuaded, that no Man ever afferted this, or faid any Thing like it. Again it is made, fays he, to signify, that God is strict and rigorous in punishing, and that his Glory is most displayed, when he is most stiff and inexorable, when he hath most of stern, and inflexible Severity, and least of Mercy (P). Answ. God is just in punishing his Creatures for Sin; and as his guilty Creatures are undeferving of Mercy, he may without any Reflection on his Goodness refuse to pardon their Sins, to fave and render them happy. He adds, but if we believe him to be necessarily wife, righteous, and good; it will then be his chief Glory to exercise an equal and impartial, but at the same Time a gracious Care over all bis (guilty) Creatures, and invariably to purfue the fittest Measures, to promote the general Good (of Criminals) (4). So this Gentleman means, or elfe he fays nothing at all to the

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<sup>(°)</sup> Page 112.

<sup>(</sup>P) Page 113.

<sup>(4)</sup> Page 113.

Purpose. These are bold Things for one to express, who has, tho' but in a fingle Instance, finned against God. What? Shall a Sinner take it upon him, to charge the Almighty with a Want of Wisdom, Righteousness, and Goodness, if he doth provide for, and invariably pursue Measures to promote his Happiness? This is matchless Presumption and Arrogance! With infinitely less Indecency, a Traitor might take the Liberty to tell his lawful Sovereign, against whom he has rebell'd, that he will neither be wife, nor righteous, nor good, if he discontinues his Favours to him, and punishes him for his Rebellion. It is most false, that the Glory of God is not a distinct Consideration, from the Exercise of his moral Perfections for the Happiness of his (guilty) Creatures (1): Which Mr. Foster must intend, for he is not speaking of Innocents. Nor is God a compassionate Father to all (finful) intelligent Beings (s). He is not fuch to Devils, neither is he such to impenitent Sinners of the human Race. He doth not; nor do Righteousness and Justice require him to act towards them in that Character. God is at full Liberty to act towards them in the awful Characters of a righteous Lawgiver and Judge; and he may determine to execute Judgment, Wrath, and Indignation upon them for Sin, and his fo doing is perfectly confistent with his Goodness. For divine Justice and divine Goodness are not inconfistent. If Justice was contrary to Goodnefs,

ness, both could not reside in God; he must then either not be just, or not good; whereas he is essentially just, and essentially good.

Mr. Foster goes on, and mentions some Cases, to which, if they could happen, the Words of his Text, would be no proper Reply. If we could suppose, says he, that God bad absolutely determined the final and eternal Misery of great Numbers of his rational Creatures (1). If by an absolute Determination, he means a Purpose to punish, without Respect had to Sin, as the Cause of the Infliction of Punishment, he makes a Supposition of what none have faid, at least, that I know of. But if he intends a Decree to execute Vengeance on some for Sin; 'till he is able to prove, that it is contrary to divine Equity and Goodness, to punish Criminals, he will not be capable of proving, that it is inconfistent with either, in God, to refolve upon the Infliction of Penalty But perhaps he thinks, that eternal Punishment for Sin, cannot be reconciled with Justice and Equity; fince he frequently speaks with Dislike of representing God, as a relentless and inexorable Judge. If he defigns this; the Confideration of two Things, will fully evince the Justice of it. One is, the great Demerit of Sin, as it is committed against God, who is an infinite Being. And the other is, the suffering Creature for Sin, will still continue finful, and to transgress; and, therefore, endless Punishment is just and equitable. Another 0 2

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Page 115.

Another Supposition is God's tempting, and exciting his Creatures to Sin ("). Neither will any Person, who has the least Sense of the divine Purity, or the evil Nature of Sin. and of Justice and Righteousness, ever imagine this. Farther, fays he, if we could suppose, that God enjoins impracticable Duties, and punishes any for not believing, or not doing Impossibilities (\*). Answ. That was once possible to Man, which is not so now, viz. perfect Obedience. Men's Inability to obey the Law perfectly, is the Consequence of Sin in Man; and, therefore, it is just, still to require finless Obedience of him: For Equity obliges not to abate of Duty, because the Creature has disabled itself, for the right and exact Performance of it, by Rebellion against God. If by Impossibilities, he designs incomprehenfible Things, it is irrational to fuppose, that we are not obliged to believe many fuch Things, viz. The eternal necessary Existence of God. - The Creation of all Things out of nothing, &c. These are Truths of natural Religion, and yet Mr. Foster, I dare affirm, can no more comprehend them, than he is able to grasp the Earth, span the Heavens, or measure boundless Space. But it may be, he does not mean, Things incomprehenfible; feeing, impossible and incomprehensible are not synonimous Terms. That which is impossible, cannot be; but we certainly know, that that which is incomprehenfible.

fible, is; and, therefore, we are bound to believe it, and except we will contradict our Reason, we must believe it. If he really defigns by Impossibilities, Things which cannot be, let him tell us, who is so irrational, as to suppose, that we are obliged to believe those impossible Things. One would think, that the Gentleman was contending with very Fools, by his Manner of arguing; but that it is usual with him to dispute after this Sort. It is such an impertinent Way of Reasoning, that I am surprized a Man of Sense could be guilty of it.

He next proceeds to give us his Sense of the general Design of the Apostle in this Chapter (y); which with the Socinians and Arminians, he takes to be this: That God determined to confer extraordinary Favours upon the Jews, as a Nation.—That no Respect is had to the eternal State of any particular Man, or Number of Men (2). This is a most false and corrupt Interpretation of the Discourse of the divine Writer, which will evidently appear by the Consideration of the Context, and the Manner of the Apostle's Reasoning in the Place.

1. He afferts, in the next preceding Chapter a divine Purpose to call, and save some particular Persons: Or a gracious Purpose in God, to make some of the human Race conformable to the *Image of his Son*; i. e. holy, and, confequently, happy.—That these Persons he O 3

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Rom. ix.

<sup>(2)</sup> Page 120.

did predestinate, call, justify, and glorify .-And firmly concludes upon their Security, and certain Happiness, from that Interest they have in the inseparable Love of God in Christ, notwithstanding the Hardships, Difficulties, and Sufferings, to which they might be exposed in this World (a). And the inspired Writer obviates an Objection, that some might be disposed to raise against the Doctrine of the Election of particular Persons, and their Safety in Consequence of such a Decree concerning them, from the Rejection of the Jews, to whom God had expressed many great and precious Promises, and whose Privileges, as a Nation, were very numerous and eminent. The Method which he takes to defend that Doctrine from all just Objection, is exceeding clear, and necessarily must be convincing to every one, that gives proper Attention to it.

He observes, that all the Israelites, and the Posterity of Abraham, were not of the Number of the Israel God intended to save, and which he afferts shall be saved: For the Proof of this Point, he notes, that of the Descendants of Islaec, and not of Ishmael, Abraham's Seed were called. And, that this Decree of Election took place in the Line of Jacob, and not in that of Esau, which most evidently proves, that all the natural Descendants of Abraham, were not included in his spiritual Seed; to whom the spiritual Promises made to him belong.

<sup>(</sup>a) Rom. viii. 30, 36, 37, 38.

But, tho' these Things demonstrate the divine Sovereignty, in dispensing spiritual Bleffings; they do not amount to a full Proof, of the main and particular Point, which the Apostle had in View, viz. That all the Israelites by Birth, and who enjoyed the external Privileges he had mentioned, were not the Objects of this Decree of Election to eternal Life, and therefore, after he has vindicated this divine, fovereign Purpose, from some Objections, which bold Spirits might dare to advance against it; he adds two Things which come up to a full and undeniable Proof of the Matter. One is the calling and Salvation of the Gentiles. And the other is, that but a Remnant, a small Number of the Israelites, were included in the fpiritual Seed, and therefore, eternal Salvation was not inseparably connected with the Enjoyment of those external Privileges, which God, in his Providence, was pleafed to confer upon them, as a Nation; and, confequently, it is an Objection of no Force, to fay, that fince that People are rejected, who enjoyed those Privileges, Election cannot be immutable: Or that the Salvation of those who are supposed to be the Objects of that gracious Decree, is not certain and infallible; because the People to whom the Promises were once made, are now cast off, and neglected by God: For not all, but some of that People only, were defigned to Salvation; and others who are not of that Race, are called by divine Grace and eternally faved. And, therefore, God bath not cast off his Peo-0 4 ple. ple, whom he foreknew; nor shall any miss of Salvation and Happiness, whom he predestinated unto Life, whether they are Jews or Gentiles, the spiritual Israel includes some of both. Thus the Apostle clearly demonstrates, that the divine Purpose of Election is unsrustrable, and the certain Salvation of all the chosen, and defends that Doctrine from all Manner of Objections, which Men might be disposed to

raise against it.

Mr. Foster afferts, that what is faid concerning Jacob and Efau relates not to them personally confidered. And affigns fome Reasons for the Proof of his Affertion; 1. That it is not true personally, but only in a national Sense, that the Elder did ferve the younger (b). Answ. This Subjection of the elder to the younger, supposes or includes in it, that the Elder and his Descendants were not Heirs of the spiritual Promises, or that they were not the spiritual Seed of Abraham: If not, the Authority to which the Apostle appeals, is impertinently alledged, and concludes nothing at all to his Purpose; but this we may by no Means think, and therefore, it was true of Efau personally, as well as of his Posterity, that he was not an Heir of spiritual Bleffings, which the spiritual Seed of Abraham were. 2. Says he, the Text in Genesis, proves unquestionably, that this was the only Thing intended in the Promise (c). Answ. Pray, Sir, why are you so confident, that the Apostle reasons in an inconclusive Man-

<sup>(</sup>h) Page 119.

Manner, and offers impertinent Proof to confirm his Doctrine? This is what you very frequently do; but the Apostle never did. To deny, that the holy Writer, discourses of a right to spiritual Blessings, in this Place, is as ridiculous as it would be to deny, that it is Light, when the Sun is in his Meridian Glory. Again, why did you not, Sir, cite the whole of the Text in Genesis? You were pleafed to omit citing, two manner of People, shall be separated from thy Bowels, i. e. one Heirs of spiritual Benefits, and the other not. One the spiritual Seed of Abraham, and the other not. Besides, it is true of Jacob personally, that he was of that spiritual Seed, and it is true of Esau personally, that he was not, or else, we must conclude, that the Apostle like you, Sir, reasons in a most weak and inconclusive manner. And finally, fays our Author, that noted Passage, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated, speaks only of the Distinction which God, in his Providence, made between the Race of Jacob and Esau, with Respect to outward and temporal Advantages (c). If so, then, the Apostle did not produce that Passage suitably to his Purpose, for it is undeniable, that he difcourses on the spiritual Seed of Abraham, and of their Right to spiritual and eternal Blessings, which are Fruits of divine Goodness and Grace, as certainly as Punishment is the just Consequence of Sin, and of the righteous Hatred of God against it.

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<sup>(</sup>c) Page 120.

Several Things may be observed, which will abundantly confirm this Matter. The Apoftle's great Concern for his Kinsmen according to the Flesh, which arose not from the Consideration of their Loss of outward and temporal Advantages only; but from the Confideration of their Rejection from a Participation in fpiritual Bleffings. Again, the Wrath of God, intends his just Displeasure against Sin, and the Destruction which is mentioned, is Sinners suffering Punishment, in Consequence of their Guilt. And the Riches of God's Glory, defign that abundant Grace, which is illustriously displayed, in the Ordination of the Vessels of Mercy to Salvation and Happiness, in fitting them for, and in preserving them to the Enjoyment of the heavenly State. Farther, the Gentiles by the Gospel are put into the Poffession, not of mere outward and external Advantages, but of spiritual and eternal Bleffings; they therefore, are the Bleffings whereof the divine Writer discourses in this Place. Moreover, those, who are counted for the Seed, are faved, and those, who are not counted for the Seed are not faved, according to the Reasoning of the Apostle here, and, confequently, we must conclude, that he speaks of the different States of Men in the next World, and not of their various Circumstances in this. But none suppose, that God absolutely determines upon the Misery of any Man hereafter, or without Respect had to Sin, as the procuring Cause of Punishment, which Mr.

Mr. Foster, either ignorantly or unrighteously suggests, that some do suppose. Having answered this Gentleman's false Reasoning on this solemn and important Subject of divine Sovereignty, I would now advance some Propositions relating to that momentous Doctrine.

PROPOSIT. I. God hath a natural and fovereign Power over all the Creatures, he has formed: And he might, if such was his Pleasure, deprive them all of Existence. Their being at all. was wholly owing to his fovereign Will, and the Continuance of their Being, entirely rests on his absolute Pleasure; he, therefore, has a Right as Lord of every Thing, to destroy or suffer to drop into nothing all the Works of his Hand. The intelligent Creature's eternal Existence refults from the divine Will, that it shall always be. Obedience to the Law gives no more Right to endless Being, than Disobedience does. Eternal Happiness according to the Law arises from Obedience, and everlasting Misery springs from Disobedience; but it is no more proper to fay, that Obedience entitles to an Eternity of Being, than it would be to affirm, that Sin gives the Creature a Right to everlasting Existence, though the eternal Being of the Creature, is necessarily supposed, in its perpetual and endless Happiness or Misery. The Eternity of the Existence of the rational Creature, is merely the refult of the Sovereign Will of the great Creator, its being for ever happy or miferable, according to the Law, follows upon Obedience or Disobedience. PROP.

## 204 God a Sovereign Being.

PROP. II. God hath a Right, if he pleases to exercise it, to deprive an innocent Creature of any Advantages and Gifts, which are not effential to the moral Perfection of its Nature; those indeed, which are so, the great Creator cannot take away, without a Reslection on his own infinite Purity and Rectitude. But those that are not essential to the moral Perfection of an intelligent Creature, God, without the least Violation of Right, or Prejudice to his Justice, or Reslection on his Holiness, might take away from an innocent Creature, and be clear of all Cause of just Complaint. For he is not a Debtor to his innocent Creatures, any farther than his free Promise makes him so.

PROP. III. In Case a Creature sins he has not only a Right to punish for the Offence; but the Rectitude and Righteousness of his Nature, will necessarily, though freely, determine him to inslict Punishment, which is the

Demerit of the Crime perpetrated.

Prop. IV. As the Dominion and Right of God and of Man differ, that which would be unjust in Man, is not so in God. For Instance, God has an absolute Dominion over the Lives and Properties of Men, and therefore, he may command one Man to take away the Life or Property of another, in which Case, it will be the Duty of a Man to do either or both these Actions, which on any other Foundation than this would be highly Criminal. To take away the Life of any Man who has not forseited it, is Murder, without a di-

vine Command; and to take another's Property, is Theft, without express Warrant from Heaven for it. But upon the Authority of a divine Command, neither Act is unlawful.

PROP. V. God has a Right to punish Sin, in the Person of the Sinner, or in another, in his flead, just as he pleases. Because, though Justice indispensably requires the Punishment of Sin; it does not fo require, that the Person finning shall suffer the Penalty, which Sin demerits; if it did no Sinner could be faved. Again, God may will and decree, that an innocent Creature shall bear the Guilt of others, and fustain the Punishment it deserves, in order to Satisfaction for it, and the Pardon of it to the Transgressors, with the Consent of that innocent Creature, and a fuitable Reward for fo eminent a Submission to his Will, and in order to a full Vindication of his Justice in the Salvation of Sinners, The Reasons of it are these: God has an absolute Power over every innocent Creature. And that innocent Creature, it is also supposed, has Power over his own Life, and may dispose of it to that important End. And that he voluntarily fo does, or fuffers Punishment with his free and full Confent; and is amply rewarded for it. Neither of these Things can possibly have Place among Men, and therefore, Justice in God, and Justice in Men is not exactly the fame. Some Conclusions evidently follow from these Things, which are of confiderable Importance. 1. God may ordain fome guilty Creatures to eter-

nal Salvation, and decree to punish others for their Sins, just as it seems good to him. 2. He may provide a Saviour for some, and suffer others to perish, since all deserve to die and perish. 3. He may pardon some, by transferring their Guilt from them to another and punishing of it in him, in order to the Satisfaction of his holy Law and of his Justice: And he may inflict the Penalty on others personally, which their Offences have rendered them worthy of. 4. He may regenerate fome, make them meet for Heaven, and preserve them safely to the Enjoyment of it, and leave others in a State of Unregeneracy. 5. God may receive fome to his immediate glorious Presence, and banish others from himfelf, on Account of their Crimes. In faving the Objects of his Love, he does no Injury to them that perish, and in their Misery he is strictly just, for he imputes not Sin to them. of which they have not been guilty, nor fubjects them to a Curse that is undeserved, nor deprives them of a State of Happiness to which they can pretend that they have the least Right, nor inflicts upon them greater Pain and Misery, than their sinful Actions deserve. To the faved, God is fovereignly gracious; and to the damned, he is perfectly just and equal; for their Punishment will not, in the least Degree, exceed the Demerit of their Crimes.

## CHAP. XI.

## Of Justification.

R. Foster very frequently speaks of the dangerous Consequences, which attend representing Reason and Religion, as inconfistent. Who they are that fo do, I profess, I know not, nor is he able, I am persuaded, to point out to us, any, that are guilty of maintaining fuch an Abfurdity. However, we are not of that Number, he may affure himself. For my Part, I am so far from thinking, that there is any Repugnancy between Reason and Religion, that it is my firm Opinion, without Reason, there can be no Religion at all; but at the same Time, I must take leave to fay, that there is more in Religion, than Reason can comprehend. I am for attending to Reason, in this Article of Justification, before God; and doubt not, but Reafon itself, if it may be heard, will convince us of the utter Impossibility, of guilty Creatures, as fuch, being accepted with him. The Light of Nature is sufficient to acquaint us, in some Degree with our Misery; though it is insufficient to direct us, how we may be interested in divine Approbation, and obtain Happiness. In order to clear up this weighty Point, I beg leave to advance

advance the following Propositions, and I defire they may be well considered and examined.

PROPOSITION I. God is infinitely wife, and holy, and powerful in his Nature.

PROP. II. All his Works are, and neces-

farily must be perfect in their Kind.

PROP. III. Man, who is the chief of the lower Creation, was certainly created perfect, or absolutely free from any Defect and Diforder, in his Constitution, viz. without any ill Temperament of Body, and evil Habits and Dispositions, in his superior Part, the Mind. For God, who is an infinitely wife, and holy, and powerful Agent, cannot be the Author of any imperfect Work. The Perfections of his Nature, will not allow us to conceive, that the least Defect or Blemish can attend the Operations of his Hand. That his Work is perfect, is the clear Voice of Reason, as well as of Revelation. And, consequently, human Nature, in its original State, must have been wholly free from moral Defects and Imperfection.

PROP. IV. Man, in his primitive State, was under an indispensable Obligation, to exert, to the utmost, all his perfect Powers, in loving, fearing, and obeying his Creator.

Prop. V. God would never require more of his Creature Man, than he was furnished with a Power to do, as he was created by him.

PROP. VI. Human Nature is actually become depraved and corrupt. This is allowed

on all Hands. We, who contend, that Men cannot be justified, by their own Works, confess and bewail the sad Corruption of our Nature: And, those, who maintain, that Sincerity is accepted of God, in the room of finless Perfection; are obliged to grant, that human Nature, is now attended with fuch Weakneffes and Imperfections, as render a perfect and universal Obedience impossible to Mankind. The Truth, therefore, of this Proposition, is not doubted of, even by our Opponents, in the momentous Point of Justification; how much foever they may be inclined to leffen and extenuate our present Depravity. As it is sufficient to my Purpose now, to allow, that we are at all corrupt and imperfect, I shall not, here, debate that Matter with them.

PROP. VII. A perfect Law can never be obeyed, in all Things, and in a complete Man-

ner, by an imperfect Creature.

Prop. VIII. God, our righteous Lawgiver and Judge, would never fuffer Man to loofe his Power of keeping a perfect Law, without the Commission of Sin on his Part.

PROP. IX. The infinitely pure Majesty of Heaven, can never approve of Impersection. If he can, then, 1. He may command it. Whatever God approves, he may will and require of his Creatures; for that which God approves of, cannot be contrary to his Nature; and that which is not contrary to his pure and holy Nature, he may will and command. And, consequently, if impersect Virtue, can be approved of God, he

may will and command it. But if moral Defect and Impurity is opposite to the infinitely pure Nature of God, as it most certainly is, then he cannot approve of, accept, nor require it. 2. If God can approve and accept of imperfect Holiness, then, imperfect Creatures, remaining fuch, may have Admittance into Heaven; except, God cannot receive those to his glorious Presence, of whom he approves, which, I think, if it should ever be afferted, it will never be proved. 3. If God can approve of and justify imperfect Creatures, as fuch, then, they may not only be received to Heaven with their Imperfections; but may eternally remain imperfect. 4. Upon this Principle, I am of Opinion, that it cannot be demonstrated that Man was ever perfect, or that the Angels above are so. For it seems to me nothing unreasonable, to suppose, that an intelligent Creature, may have always been, and that he may eternally continue to be, fuch as God can approve of and justify.

PROP. X. And, therefore, God cannot approve, accept of, or justify an imperfect Creature, as such. Two Things clearly e-

vince the Truth of this Proposition.

1. Such as, God cannot, by Reason of the Holiness and Perfection of his own Nature, make a reasonable Creature, he cannot approve of and justify as such. Now, God could not create Man with evil Inclinations and imperfect Powers, and for the very same Reason, that he could not form Man with vicious Habits

Habits and defective Powers, he cannot justify him, as he is become the Subject of depraved and corrupt Principles. Such as Men are, when accepted of God, such he might make Man, and by Consequence, if God approves of Men, as imperfect, he might create Man attended with Vice and Imperfection. The latter is shockingly absurd, and the former is no less so.

2. If an intelligent Creature is fuch in himfelf as God approves, accepts of, and justifies, there can be no Necessity of that Creature, ever being other than he is. It is fufficient to any Creature to be the Subject of fuch Qualities, as recommend him to the Favour, and interest him in the Approbation of the infinitely best of Beings: Nor need any defire to become the Subjects of higher and more refined Virtue, than fuch, as their Sovereign Judge will accept of and justify them, on Account of; if therefore, imperfect Virtue is accepted with God, there is no Necessity of perfect Holiness, nor is there any Reason to be offered, why Men should be in the least concerned, that they are not perfectly holy and innocent. Hence, we see the fatal Tendency of the Doctrine of Justification by Works. That Opinion, is warmly contended for, under a Pretence, of Zeal for Holiness; but it leads us unavoidably to the most monstrous and abfurd Conclusions, viz. That, God may be pleased with Impersection. That, he might make Man imperfect .-- And, that Men have have no Occasion to regret, that they are not finless and innocent. And, therefore, I cannot but pronounce, that Opinion irrational, abfurd, and unfriendly to Holiness and perfect Virtue, which is alone acceptable to God, and is the true Glory of an intelligent Creature.

PROP. XI. Man's Incapacity to keep a perfect Law is wholly owing to Sin, on his Part, God is no Cause of it. 1. God created Man perfect in Holiness, or, with sufficient Ability to obey the whole Law, which he stood obliged to observe. 2. God did not deprive Man of that Power, nor fuffer him to loose it; but upon Offence on his Part. think each of these Particulars is so evident, that the Reason of every Man, will oblige him, to affent to their Certainty and Truth. And, therefore, we must necessarily conclude upon the Truth of these Things; (1.) That God is not obliged on his Part, to make fuch Abatements, in his Precepts, as the prefent corrupt and depraved State of Mankind requires, in order to Men's Observance of them, and obtaining Justification and Life, by their own Works. No divine Perfection dictates to this Method; so far from it, that this would be an Act inconfistent with the Righteousness and Purity of the Nature of God. (2.) Nor is the divine Lawgiver under Obligation, to re-furnish Man, with a Power, which he criminally loft. (3.) Neither is it any Act of Cruelty in God, still to require of Men and condemn them for the want

want of it, a perfect Obedience to his perfect Law.

I am fenfible, that it is often affirmed by fome with great Confidence, that God cannot require his Creatures to do, what is beyond their Power. This is certainly true, if Respect was herein had to the Creature, as created by God; but that is not the Case, for they intend Man in his apostate and corrupt State; and, therefore, when they urge, that it is contrary to divine Goodness, to punish Men for not doing what is impossible, (as Mr. Foster frequently does) they are guilty of the most evidently false Reasoning and greatest Impertinence; unless, they really mean, that if God doth not make Abatements, in his Demands of Obedience, proportionable to that Inability to obey him, Men by Vice, become the Subjects of. If this is what they intend, then, by how much the more, Men are enslaved to Lusts, by how much the more strong evil Habits are in them, by so much the less God requires them to be virtuous, and will accept of and justify them on Account of their Endeavours, how defective and imperfect foever they are. - Then, God finks in commanding Holiness of his Creatures, as they grow more profligate and wicked, and are under the Influence of evil Habits, strongly and deeply rooted in the Mind. If they defign this, then, let them never more pretend, that they reject the Opinion of Justification, by the Righteousness of another, out of a P 3

cern for personal Holiness and inherent Rectitude. For that Opinion is not attended with any Consequence, in the least prejudicial to Holiness, which theirs most evidently is. If what they mean is, that God commands not that, which Man never had a Power to do, they have no Opponent, except in their Imaginations, and they have full Liberty to display their Rhetoric on this Head, and may do it, without offending, or injuring of any Man,

or Principle of ours.

They will never be able to prove, that it is inconfistent with the Goodness of God, to command that of his Creature Man, which he has lost a Power to do, in Consequence of a Criminal Behaviour, let them wrangle, and dispute, as long as they please. They may as foon prove, that a Master is cruel, to be angry with a Servant, for not doing the Business of the Day, allotted him to do, because he rendered himself uncapable of performing it, by his Intemperance; as prove, that it is any Instance of Cruelty in the divine Being, to require Man, to obey his pure and perfect Law, because, he has rendered himself incapable of it, by Sin. They may as foon prove, that a Lord is unjust, who demands his own of his Steward, and punishes him, for not paying it; when he hath it not, because, he has fpent it in Luxury and Extravagance. God furnished Man with a Power to keep his Law, that Power he did not take from Man; (none fure will fay he did) but Man became enfeebled,

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bled, by Sin against his Maker, and therefore, his present Inability is no Excuse for his defective Obedience. I know, that this Reafoning will be objected to, upon our Opinion of the Way, wherein human Nature became depraved; but there is no Necessity to defend it, in this Place, because Reason, if it can inform us of any Thing at all, with Relation to these Matters, will most assuredly inform us, that Man could not lose, that God would never suffer him to lose, that Power to keep the Law, without Guilt on his Part. And, confequently, this Reasoning can never be answered, let Men become guilty or chargeable with Sin, in what Way foever: In the Way we apprehend, or in any other Way imaginable.

Upon the whole, I can't but apprehend, that if Men were not influenced, by a Principle of Self-Love and Tenderness for themfelves.—That if they were not under strong Prejudices in their own Favour.—That if they were not too ready to conclude upon the Truth of what they wish was true, without any reasonable and solid Ground.-That if they were not backward of admitting that for Truth, which they dread should appear to be Truth, I say, I cannot but apprehend, that Reafon itself, would guide them, in some Meafure, into the Knowledge of their miserable Condition, and compel them to grant, that they have brought certain and inevitable Destruction upon themselves, if God their righteous Judge, should please, as he undoubtedly may, to proceed towards them according to the Nature and Demerit of their imperfect and defective Obedience, to his pure and holy Law. For it is certainly reasonable, to conclude, that God made Man upright. - That no Defect, or Blemish attended human Nature, in its original State. - It is against all Reafon and Sense, to imagine, that human Nature is now perfectly holy, and free from moral Impurity.—It is abfurd in the highest Degree, to conceit, that Man became the Subject of evil Habits and Inclinations, without any Offence committed against God, by him.— And it is unreasonable to suppose, that Man becomes free from Obligation to Duty and Obedience, by Disobedience and Sin on his Part. -It is repugnant to Reason itself, to think, that imperfect Virtue, and Obedience stained with Guilt, as Man's is, can be approved of God and recommend him to his Favour. - It is highly irrational to apprehend, that God can justify Man, when and as he is such, as he could not create him, by Reason of his own infinite Rectitude and Purity. It is therefore, reasonable to conclude, that the State of human Nature is miserable and remediless, if Men are really to be tried and judged according to the Demerit of their Actions.

Mr. Foster, in treating about the Doctrine of Justification, made Choice of a Text, which it been apprehended, establishes the important Truth of free Justification, without any Works of our own. And gives such a

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Sense of it, as is quite inconsistent with that glorious Truth. Whether he has acted the Part of a Workman, that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, will foon appear, by an impartial Confideration of his Discourse upon it. His Text is contained in Rom. x. 2. For they being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the Righteousness of God. This Gentleman, in the Explication of the Words, it might be expected, would have shewn, what Righteousness of God, the Jews were ignorant of, which occasioned their Non-Submission to his Righteousness, differently, to be understood. But this he hath not attempted. The Righteousness of God, sometimes designs the Justice, Rectitude, and infinite Holiness of his Nature: So it is to be taken, in these Words, to declare his Righteousness,—to declare, I say, at this Time his Righteousness, that he might be just, &c. i. e. that his Righteousness and Justice, might appear in the Justification of a Sinner. Again, it intends, that Righteousness by which sinful Men are justified: In that Sense, it must be understood, in this Scripture; but now the Righteousness of God without a Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets: Even the Righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no Difference (\*). That

<sup>(</sup>a) Rom. iii. 21, 22.

That hereby a Rightepulness for Justification, is intended, the state Score of the Place undeniably proves:

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The grand Question, with Relation to this Point, is this: What that Righteousness is, which the Law and the Prophets give Testimony of, whereby Men are justified in the Sight of God, and which the Jews resused a Submission unto. In order to form a true Judgment concerning this Matter, which hath been the Subject of much Debate, it will be very proper, to consider well, what the Apostle himself delivers, on this momentous Doctrine of Justification, in his Epistle to the Romans, and in his Epistle to the Galatians.

1. The Apostle affirms, that this Righteoufness is without a Law, he doth not say without the Law 78 10 µs with the Article; but 10 µs only, without the Article. It is therefore, without any Law perfect or imperfect. And he afferts, that there is no Law given, which can give Life; and that Righteousness, i. e. for Justification, is not by a Law. The inspired Writer fully proves, that all Men have sinned, and come short of the Glory of God.—
That all are guilty in his Sight, and obnoxious to his Displeasure, and from thence, he infers this Conclusion, that by the Deeds of a Law, shall no Flesh living be justified, which Conclusion

fion he confirms thus; for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin (b). A Law therefore, whereby we may know that we are defective in our Obedience, by which we may be convinced, that we have finned, can never juftify us, unless our Obedience is fuch, as the Law requires; in which Case it cannot accuse of Offence. Now if it is impossible to be justified by a Law, which charges Sin upon, and convinces Men of Sin, then, if fuch a Law is not given of God, which Men may be faid to have fully and perfectly obeyed, they must be convinced of Sin by it; and, consequently, their Justification in his Sight, cannot possibly be by that Law. If fuch a Law is given, by the Observation of which, Men may be justified; then they cannot be convicted of any Transgression by that Law; and, of Consequence, a justified Person must be thought not to have offended, he must necessarily be reputed innocent and finless.

If Men are accounted Sinners, they must have violated some Law, for where no Law is, there is no Transgression. And if the Reasoning of the Apostle is of Force, Justification cannot be by any Law, from which the Knowledge of having sinned is derived. Now there is no Law, by, or according to which, Man can be esteemed innocent, and therefore,

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2. The Apostle denies that Justification is of the Deeds of a Law,—that it is of Works,

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2. The Apostle denies that Justification is of the Deeds of a Law,—that it is of Works,

<sup>(</sup>b) Rom. iii. 19, 20.

viz. of our personal Obedience to a Law. To fay, that it is of imperfect Works, that Men are justified in the Sight of God, is not to interpret, but to contradict the Apostle. He fays, that Righteousness without Works, is imputed, in order to Justification: Some are pleased to contradict him, and say, that those Works of Righteousness, which Men perform, are imputed to them, or accepted, as their justifying Righteousness. All Righteoulnels confilts of Works conformable to a righteous Law. If, therefore, in the Justification of Men, any Righteousness is imputed to them, that Righteousness must be either their own personal Obedience to the Law, or the Obedience of another: If it is their perfonal Obedience that is imputed to them, it can never be faid, with the least Appearance of Truth, that Righteousness without Works, is imputed to them; but if the Obedience of another is reckoned, it may truly be faid, that that Righteousness imputed to them, is without Works, viz. any personal Works of theirs, which is the only Sense, wherein the Apostle with the least Propriety can be understood, when he fays, that Righteousness without Works is imputed in our Justification (c).

3. In our Acceptance with God, Boasting must not have any Place. The Apostle constantly teaches, that that is wholly excluded, and observes, that it is not by a Law of Works. If Works are the Matter of our Acceptance

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<sup>(4)</sup> Rem. iv. 6.

with God, and the Cause of our receiving divine Benefits, then we have Ground and Foun-

dation for Boafting.

Not as if our Obedience had fuch intrinfic Value in it, as to merit the Reward. Perfect Obedience hath not fuch Worth attending it: For there is no Proportion between the finless Obedience of a perfect Creature, and the Happiness communicated to Men, which is intended by the Reward. But the Reward would then be of Debt, that is to fay, we might claim it, as our Due, upon the Foot of Right, having performed the Conditions on which the Reward is promifed. This is what the Apostle designs by Boasting, and which he affirms is excluded, not by a Law of Works, but by the Law of Faith (4). The Socinians and Arminians understand a Law which doth not prescribe or require perfect Works, as Conditions of Acceptance and Justification. To which I answer. (1.) The Jews were not of Opinion, that perfect Obedience is required to Justification; and therefore, if the Apostle excludes perfect Works only from Justification, there was no proper Foundation of Controverfy between him and them. (2.) The Apostle speaks of Works, without distinguishing them into perfect and imperfect, and, therefore, this Distinction of Works, with Relation to the great Doctrine of Justification, is a mere human Invention. It cannot be supported by the Language and Reasoning of the divine

<sup>(</sup>d) Rom. iii. 27.

divine Writer. (3.) Such Obedience as that Law requires of us, which is the Rule of our Behaviour, is necessary to our Justification by it: That Obedience is our Duty, and nothing more; if, therefore, imperfect Works only, are required of us in order to our Acceptance with God; perfect Works are not our Duty, or we are not required to practife perfect Holiness; and if we are not obliged by the Law to perfect Works, then imperfect Works are the whole of our Duty; and we cannot be accounted Offenders, we have done what is our Duty to do, and, consequently, there is no Place for Remission, because Pardon necesfarily supposes Sin, either in a Defect of performing Duty, or in acting contrary to it: And if there is no Place for Remission, Boasting cannot be excluded.

Farther, if the Law, which is the Rule of our Conduct, requires an imperfect Obedience only, in order to Justification, I should be glad to know, what Degrees of Imperfection it allows of, what Sins, and what Number of Sins may consist with Justification by it. Whether, if a Man should happen to be guilty, thro' any violent Temptation, of Dissimulation and Lying, of Adultery and Murder, of Vanity and Pride, of murmuring against God, and telling him to his Face, that he does well to be angry with his Dispensations, even unto Death, of swearing and cursing with a Denial of Christ, or of Incest: I say, I should be glad to know, whether these and such like Enormi-

ties may confift with Justification by our own Works, according to this Law, whether, it allows of fuch Imperfections; (I bless God, not with the least Defire to practife them, but) because I have a great Veneration for the Memory of some Persons, who were guilty of these Vices, and should be exceeding forry, to have it prov'd, that they were not accepted with God, or justified in his Sight. If the Law requires no other Obedience in order to Justification, than what may confist with fuch Actions, it is easy to prove, that these Actions are not Sins: For the Law requires no more as Duty, than it requires to Acceptance by it; except a Man may be accepted and justified for what he does, tho' he does not his Duty; and if a Man may be accepted by his own Works, who does not his Duty, no Danger attends the Violation of the Law. because the Law enjoyns that as Duty, which it will dispense with the Omission of, in the Bufiness of Justification. 'Tis just the same, as to Acceptance with God, if a Man fails in the Performance of his Duty, or punctually performs it. The Man who is imperfect in his Obedience is approved and rewarded for his Services, and if another Man could perfeetly perform his Duty, it is impossible, that he should enjoy any superior Advantages.

4. We cannot be justified by our Obedience to any Law, according to which we are rightly deemed Transgressors. The Reason is very evident; if we fulfil not a Law, which is

the Rule of our Conversation, we are Sinners. and must be so accounted according to that Law; and if on Account of a partial Obedience only to the Law, we really are, and must be reputed Offenders; we cannot be accounted righteous by or according to that Law, unless the Law requires one Kind of Righteousness as Duty, and accepts of another in our Justification, which it is abfurd to imagine; for the Lawgiver must then account us righteous, without that Righteousness he requires us to practife. And, consequently, if God commands perfect Holiness of us, he cannot esteem us righteous in our own Obedience, if it is partial only and incomplete. We must be that in his Account, which we are in Fact, if his Judgment is according to Truth; righteous, if we have wrought fuch Righteonfness as he demands of us in his Law; but unrighteous, if we have not. The necessary Consequence of which is this, that if God commands, or has made perfect Holiness our Duty, he cannot accept and justify us, if our Obedience is defective and imperfect, viz. on Account of that Obedience. This is perfectly agreeable to the Reasoning of the Apostle on this Subject. He concludes upon the Impossibility of the Justification of any Man by the Works of a Law, from hence, viz. every Man being a Sinner, and to be proved such by the Law: If therefore, there is any Force in his Reasoning, we must conclude, that no Man can be justified by any Law; according to which every Man,

by Reason of his defective Obedience to it, is rightly denominated a Transgressor. therefore, if there is any Law given, by which Men may be justified, thro' their Obedience to it; by that Law, it can never be proved, that they are Sinners. And if there really is fucha Law given, whereby Men cannot be convicted of Sin, then that Law commands not perfect Holiness; unless we will maintain. that Men are finless and perfect in their Obedience. Once more: If by this Law, supposed to be accommodated to the present State of human Imperfection and Weakness, Men may be justified, on Account of their own Works, in Obedience to it; then it demands or requires not perfect Holiness; so far from it, that no unfit Action, which hinders not our Justification, can truly be accounted criminal. If, therefore, a Man that commits Adultery or Murder, or any other unfit Action, may notwithstanding be justified by that Law, or by his own Works, performed in Obedience to it; by that Law he cannot be proved to be a Sinner; nor can such detestable Actions ever be proved criminal by that The Absurdity, therefore, of this Distinction of Works, is very great, plain and evident; and as it has no Foundation in Revelation, it hath not in Reason; it is no other than a Figment, a Dream, or a foolish Invention of Men, to evade the Force of the Apoftle's clear and nervous Reasoning on this important Subject.

5. If Men are justified in the Sight of God by the Works of a Law, then Christ died in vain, or there was no Necessity of his Death; that stupendous Transaction, answers no important End, respecting God as a Judge, nor the Law, nor Men. For if we may be justified by our own Obedience to a Law, then we cannot be accounted Sinners by that Law; and if we are not Transgressors, or reputed such, no atoning Sacrifice is required, in order to Peace and Reconciliation; God hath nothing against us, as our Lawgiver, and Judge; his Law charges us with no Offence, pronounces no Threatning against us, nor is the Justice of God displeased with us, and, consequently, no propitiatory Sacrifice was needful to be offered for us, to fecure our Pardon, to make Reconciliation, and effect our Recovery from Ruin; because no Danger can attend those, who are accepted with God on the Foundation of their own Works. For that Obedience which justifies, cannot subject Men to Condemnation and Death; that Obedience which entitles Men to Heaven, cannot reasonably be supposed to deserve Hell; on Account of any Imperfections attending it, however great, or many they may be. If it is faid, that the Death of Christ was necessary to satisfy the perfect Law of God, which we have violated, and to redeem us from the Curse of that Law. I answer, (1.) If God can approve of Imperfection, he may dispense with the Want of a perfect Obedience. (2.) Then the Justice and Righteousness

Righteousness of God, did not require Satisfaction for Sin; and if Satisfaction for Sin was not required by the Justice of God, the Death of Christ was unnecessary to such an End. And if the Death of Christ was not necessary to make Atonement for Sin, his dying for Sinners, could not be necessary at all. (3.) If God can approve of, and justify Men, on Account of their own Works, tho' imperfect, then it is unreasonable to suppose, that their Imperfections subject them to his Displeasure; and if the defective Obedience of Men, does not subject them to the righteous Displeasure of God, but he accepts of them, notwithstanding their Defects; then it cannot be contrary to the Justice and Rectitude of the divine Nature, to forgive Offences, and abate of the Command of Perfection, without any Satisfaction made for Sin to his Law.

6. God justifies Men who work not, and therefore Works performed by them, cannot be the Cause of their Justification. Crellius fays, that they work not, or obey not perfectly: This is not to explain, but to contradict the Apostle. He says the justified Person worketh not (e), i. e. in order to his Justification; fays Crellius, he does work to that End, and his The Distinction of work-Works justify him. ing perfectly and imperfectly, is not to be found throughout the Apostle's Discourse on this Subject. What he intends, is working in order to Acceptance, or working fuch a Righ-Q 2 teouineis,

<sup>(\*)</sup> Rom. iv. 5.

teousness, as is acceptable and pleasing to God, and for which he might be justified. God justifies such who do not perform Obedience, that is acceptable to him, in itself, and therefore Works cannot be the Matter and Caufe of their The Inference which Crellius Iustification. draws from hence, is not more abfurd, than it is unnatural and forced, viz. That Abraham wrought nothing good, if this is true; for the Design of the Apostle is to prove, that Abraham did not work out fuch an Obedience as justified his Person, and not, that he or any other Man, who is accepted with God, doeth no Good. It is one Thing not to perform good Works to Justification, and another, not to do any good Works: The former is true of Abraham, and of every other justified Person, the latter is not. These Things fufficiently evince and prove, that Men are not justified by their own Works. If Justification is not by a Law, if it is not by the Deeds of a Law, if the Reward is not of Debt, and all Boasting is excluded, if Men in Justification are accounted righteous, and they are in themselves Sinners, and may be proved fuch by the Law, which is the Rule of their Conduct, if the Death of Christ was unnecessary, upon a Supposition of Justification by Works, and if Men are justified, who work not a justifying Righteousness, I fay, if these Things are true, which undoubtedly they are, for the Apostle affirms them in the plainest Language; no Man is or

can be justified in the Sight of God, by his own Obedience to a Law. And, therefore, we conclude, with the Apostle, and shall always insist upon it, that by the Deeds of a Law, there shall no Flesh be justified in the Sight of God.

The Justification of a Sinner consists of two Parts. First. The Non-Imputation or Pardon of Sin. This is thro' the Sufferings and Death of Christ. God bath set him forth to be a Propitiation, thro' Faith in his Blood to declare his Righteousness for the Remission of Sins. In him we have Redemption thro' his Blood, the Forgiveness of Sins. Much more then being justified by his Blood. The Susserings of the blessed Jesus therefore, are the meritorious Cause of our Discharge from Guilt: God for Christ's Sake, i. e. on Account of his Death, hath forgiven us. So that he is the only procuring Cause of the Forgiveness of our Sins.

Secondly. The other Branch of Justification, is accounting a Man righteous, in order to which some Righteousness must be imputed to him; either his own personal Righteousness, or the Obedience and Righteousness of another. That a Sinner cannot be justified by his own Works, we have, I think, clearly proved; and therefore, if he is ever accepted and justified in the Sight of God, it must be by the Imputation of another's Righteousness. That so a Sinner is justified, I now proceed to prove. 1. That Righteousness of God, by which we are justified, is without a Law. Every righteous

Law enjoyns the Practice of Righteousness on Men; which if they perform, they have that very Righteousness, which the Law requires in order to Justification; and, therefore, it can never be said, with the least Appearance of Truth, that their justifying Righteousness is without a Law; because the Law demands a personal Obedience to Justification, and such theirs is. Hence we must necessarily conclude, that that Righteousness of God, whereby we are justified, is not our personal Obedience to a Law.

2. This Righteousness is without the Deeds of a Law, or it is a Righteousness without Works. If Men's personal Righteousness is the Matter of their Justification, that Righteoufness confists of Deeds done by themselves, in Obedience to the Law, and is made up of their personal Works, and of such Works as the Law requires in order to Juffification; otherwise they cannot be justified by it; and therefore, Mens own Righteousness cannot be the Matter of their Justification; for, in no Sense, can their own personal Righteousness, be said to be without the Deeds of a Law, or without Works; and, confequently, we are justified by the Righteousness of another, which the Law makes no Discovery of, nor requires of us to Justification, and which is without any personal Works of ours. For in no other Sense, can Righteousness be said to be without the Deeds of a Law, and without Works; fince all Righteousness is a Conformity

formity to a Law, and is constituted of such

Works, as are commanded by a Law.

3. That Righteousness whereby we are justified in the Sight of God, is a free Gift. Hence it is called the Gift of Righteousness. If our justifying Righteousness consists of our own Works, it is not a Gift; we have it in ourfelves, or it is performed by ourselves, we do not derive it from another, and therefore it cannot be given to us. That Righteousness on Account of which we are justified, is a free Gift; and, consequently, it is not our own personal Righteousness, or Obedience to a Law.

That Righteousness or Obedience, whereby we are constituted, or made righteous, is our justifying Righteousness; and that is the Obedience of another, viz. Christ. By the Obedience of one, shall many be made righteous (f). A Man that obeys the Law, is righteous in himself, and needs not any other Righteousness than his own, in order to his Justification; but he who hath not obeyed the Law, is unrighteous, and cannot be justified by his own Works; and the only Way of his being made righteous by the Obedience of another, is by the Imputation of the other's Obedience to him. The Apostle afferts, that we are made righteous by the Obedience of one, viz. Christ; and therefore, his Righteousness is imputed to us, for our Justification. The Socinians and Arminians, and some others

(f) Rom. v. 19.

fay, God deals with us, as if we were righteous for the Sake of Christ, or for the Sake of his Righteousness. The Apostle says, that we are made righteous. To receive Favours as if we were righteous, tho' we are not, nor are made so, is one Thing; and to be made righteous is quite another. It is the latter, that the divine Writer asserts, and not the former; from hence, therefore, it is rightly concluded, that the Righteousness of Christ, and not our own personal Obedience, is imputed to us, in Order to our Acceptance with God.

5. Our justifying Righteousness is revealed to Faith. It is revealed from Faith to Faith (5); and, therefore, it is not Faith itself. That which is discovered to Faith, and whereupon it acts in Consequence of that Revelation of it, cannot be Faith: For that which is revealed to Faith, must be something distinct from it; for a Thing revealed, and that to which it is revealed, cannot be the fame. They are certainly different. Hence, we must necessarily conclude, that Faith is not our justifying Righteousness. These Things are plainly expressed; they are not delivered in obscure and figurative Terms and Modes of Speech; but in Language so clear and evident, that all the Art and Criticism Men can use, will never stiffe the Evidence which they afford, to the great Doctrine of Juffification, without any Works of ours.

I shall now consider Mr. Foster's Account of the Apostle's Doctrine with Relation to

Justification. And,

I. He thinks it is evidently this: That both Yervs and Gentiles were, upon embracing the Gospel, and professing Faith in Christ, freed from the Guilt of all their past Sins, and brought into a State of Reconciliation with God,that Faith was accepted for the Remission of Sins that were past, and for the Remission of them only (h). I observe, 1. That it is the Blood of Christ that cleanses from all Sin, and not Faith: That is accepted for the Remission of Sins; that was shed to that End; which was the Blood of Christ alone, and not Faith. Men enjoy Reconciliation with God, Consequence of the Death of their Redeemer, who made Peace for them by the Blood of his Cross. 2. Tho' in the Justification of a Sinner, a Discharge from Guilt is necessarily included, yet that is not the whole of Justification; it supposes Acceptance as well as Pardon, accounting a Man righteous, as well as remitting his Sins. Now if Faith with the good Works which we allow it produces, recommends our Persons to God, then Justification is of a Law.—It is then of the Deeds of a Law.— Then it is the proper Effect of our own perfonal Works, which the Apostle constantly denies; and, therefore, it is an Abuse of him, and an Affront to his Writings, to palm this Opinion upon them. 3. Sin that is really for-

<sup>(</sup>h) Vol. III. of Sermons, page 31, 33.

given, will never be again charged; if any did not continue in Faith and good Works, then according to this Principle, some of their Sins were forgiven, and some not, which it is absurd to conceive. 4. I beg leave to ask what is the Cause of the Pardon of suture Sins? Faith it seems is not; what then is? Such who believed the Gospel and professed Faith in Christ, afterwards sinned, for they were not perfect or sinless, after Faith and the Profession of it.

The Gentleman produces no Place out of the Epistles of Paul to prove the Principles, which he advances, though he confidently tells us, that this is his Doctrine. Some Things he cites from him, to prove what we have never denied, what we have always acknowledged, and ever shall do, viz. that Faith is productive of Holiness and good Works; this is evidently the Doctrine of the Apostle Paul. it don't follow from hence, that the Apostle taught, that Faith with its Fruits is the Matter and Cause of our Justification; it is one Thing to maintain that, that Faith, which apprehends our free Justification by Christ, is a holy Principle, and works by Love; and another to affert, that it is our Faith as a working Principle in the Heart, that recommends our Persons to God, and justifies us in his Sight, the former of these the Apostle constantly taught; but of the latter, there is a deep Silence, in all his Writings. It is falfely, and without any Appearance of Truth, attributed

to him by this Author, notwithstanding his Assurance and great Freedom in asserting it.

II. Mr. Foster goes on to observe, that some have apprehended a Disagreement in the Writings of the Apostles Paul and James on this Argument—that James has been thought less evangelical, than the Apostle Paul (i). Upon which Topic, the Author uses much Rhetoric, to shew the Weakness and Folly of such Apprehensions; but in my humble Opinion there was not the least Necessity, to labour this Point, in the manner he does. That some among the Ancients doubted of the Authority of the Epistle of James is well known; but that any now do, I am not sensible, neither do I think, that there are any among us, who are of Opinion, that the Apostle fames is less evangelical than the Apostle Paul, or who think, that there is any Inconfistency between what the two Apostles affert.

I can't but apprehend that the seeming Contrariety between these two divine Writers, as one observes, may be reconciled in three Words. That it is the mere Carcass of Faith, (but by no Means an active Faith and an Attendant of Salvation celebrated of the Apostle Paul) which as empty and barren James rejects. This Observation perfectly reconciles the two Apostles on this Argument. Paul treats of the Matter of Justification, and James discourses of the true Nature and genuine Effects, which

flow

<sup>(</sup>i) Page 34, 35.

flow from a true Faith, that apprehends our

justifying Righteousness.

III. This Author fets himfelf about the reconciling Paul and James, the Method he takes to do it, is this. 1. He tells us, That when Paul fays, that we are justified by Faith without the Deeds of the Law, it can amount to no more than this, that Faith is the Condition of Pardon and Justification—and not absolute uncorrupted Innocence, or the Perfection of Virtue (k). I answer, 1. He will never be able to prove, that Paul has advanced this Doctrine, or any Thing like it. His Doctrine is plainly this, that the Righteousness of a Law—that a Righteousness confisting of our own personal Works, is not the Matter of our Justification before God. 2. It feems to me very improper to fuggest, that Innocence is corrupt, Innocence is free from any Taint of Evil, if a Man is but in the lowest Degree corrupt in his Obedience, fo far he is nocent, not innocent; guilty and not guiltless. 3. Paul has no where, infinuated, that an imperfect Obedience will be accepted with God, or justify the Subject of it in his Sight. 2. Says our Author, is not this the very Thing which he (James) so earnestly contends for, viz. that Righteousness and Obedi-ence are the Life of Faith (1). Answer, It is true that that Faith which is not productive of Obedience is a dead and barren Faith; but it doth not follow, that Faith and the Effects of it are the Cause of our Justification before God. 3. Or

Or suppose the former to have meant, that the Ceremonial Law, under the Gospel Dispensation, is no Part of acceptable Religion ("). Answer. The Apostle Paul cannot mean the Ceremonial Law, because in this Discourse he says not a Word concerning it. Again, he intends a Law that requires Obedience in order to Justication, and by which the Knowledge of Sin, is obtained, neither of which is true of the Ceremonial Law. 4. Says he, If again we take St. Paul thus; that upon Faith in Christ-God was pleased to be propitious and receive his guilty Creatures into Favour, notwithstanding their former Irregularities (1). I answer, 1. Sir, you feem inclined to take him in any other Sense, than his true Meaning. 2. Paul teaches us, that God is propitious and reconciled to Men before they believe: If when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the Death of bis Son; and, therefore, it is not Faith that renders God propitious, it must be something else. 3. Faith is an Effect and not a Cause of our Reconciliation with God, according to the Doctrine of the Apostle Paul. 4. He teaches, that the Death of Christ is the Cause and Foundation of Peace and Reconciliation with God, and therefore, Faith is not the Cause or Foundation of it. 5. This Gentleman observes, that Paul taught, that without Holiness no Man shall see the Lord. I answer, 1. He did so, and fo do we; but he did not teach that our personal Holiness is the Matter of our JustifiState; he always taught the Necessity of Holiness, as our Meetness to the deven; but he has no where declared, that it gives us a light to Happiness. 2. It is false Reasoning, to conclude, that Obedience is unnecessary, because it is not allowed to be our justifying Righteousness.

Mr. Foster having dispatched the first Branch of his Subject, he proceeds to shew what the Apostle designs, in censuring the Yews, for going about to establish their own Righteousness. Two Things he allows, with Respect to our personal Righteousness: 1. That it is imperfect, and that therefore, none can entertain Hopes of being justified by it, if perfect Rectitude, is required in order to Justification (°). The Jews then, did not pretend that their Righteousness was perfect and unblemished, or that a complete Obedience to the Law was indispensably required to their Acceptance with God, and, confequently, if the Apostle, when he excludes Works from Justification, intends only perfect Works, or an unerring Obedience to the Law, there was really no difference between him and the Yeros. They were perfectly agreed, in this, that complete Righteoulness, is not the Condition of Men's Acceptance with God. 2. He grants, that our moral Righteousness, when carried to the utmost Height it is at present capable of, cannot be faid, in siriet Justice, to merit that glorious Reward of eternal Life (1). On which, I obferve

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 39.

ferve, 1. That, an unerring Obedience, cannot be faid, in strict Justice to merit that Reward; because, it is due to God, it would be performed in his Strength, and there is no Proportion, between that Obedience, and this Reward. 2. The Jews furely did not think, that they merited eternal Life, by their strictest Observation of the Law, since they were conscious of Imperfections, attending their Obedience, and therefore, if the Apostle only excluded Works, which they might apprehend, in strict Justice merited the Reward, viz. perfect Works, there still was no difference between him and them; all Controverfy might have ceased, betwixt the Apostle and the Years, if they had understood one another, with Respect to the Influence Men's personal Righte-The only oufness has into their Salvation. Difference, which, upon this Principle, can be supposed, to have subsisted between them, is this; the Yews apprehended, that good Works were of themselves, without Faith in Christ, fufficient to Salvation; and the Apostle maintained, that Faith in him, was to be superadded to their Obedience to the Law of Righteoufness if they would enter into Life. Hence therefore, it must be concluded, that the Apostle was at the Expence of great Labour to prove to them, what they did not doubt of, viz. That perfect Obedience is not required of Men in order to Life, and that imperfect Obedience, in strict Justice, cannot merit Heaven; neither of which, they ever believed or dreamt of.

of. The Apostle therefore instead of excluding Works from Justification, should have told them, you are right in seeking Life, by your own personal Obedience to the Laws of God; your only Mistake is denying Jesus to be the Messiah. If he had so done, they would never have charged him, as they did, with advancing licentious Principles, viz. That we may do Evil that Good may come. They could not have done so, for there would not have been the least shew of Truth in such a Charge.

After granting these two Things, he briskly enquires, But of what of all this? Because Mankind are incapable of pleasing their Maker, by yielding an absolute and invariable Obedience to the eternal Law of Righteousness; does it follow from bence, that they cannot render themselves acceptable to him, by a universal Course of sincere Obedience? Are good Dispositions and fincere Endeavours to serve and honour him, of no Significancy, with the wifest and most compassionate of all Beings, for want of something, which the very original Constitution of our Nature has quite put it out of our Power? Is the prevailing Turns and Biass of our Minds insufficient to plead for us; and are involuntary and unallowed Imperfections of Weight enough, even with impartial Mercy, to condemn us? Because Virtue, does not properly, and in an exact Notion of Equality, merit the transcendent Honour and Felicity, to which it is the gracious Appointment of God, that it shall be bereafter advanced; has it therefore, no Loveliness and Worth

Worth in it, to render it as a fit and fuitable Object of peculiar Favour and Complacency? These, surely, are Inferences drawn at Random,

&c. (9).

Sir, you are pleafed to write here with a great Air of Triumph and Confidence, and feem to think, that you have unquestionably, gained your Point of establishing Works, as the Matter of our Justification; but let me beg the Favour of you to be cool and deliberate a little, as you have defired others to be, then, perhaps, you may see Reason to conclude that there is nothing of Weight in all this, against the Doctrine of Justification, without our own personal Obedience to a 1. Since you allow, that Men cannot possibly perform the whole of their Duty, you ought to have proved, and you must prove, before you can reasonably expect to have the Point, for which you contend, granted you, that God will accept of and justify Men for a partial Obedience to his Law. This you have not yet done, nor will you ever be able to do it, I am firmly perfuaded. 2. If a univerfal Course of fincere Obedience, is indispensably required, as a Condition of Happiness, then, (1.) Those, who have failed of yielding such a a Course of fincere Obedience to the Law of God, must inevitably perish. (2.) The Fate therefore, of those, who have been at all disfolute in their Behaviour, is miserable, without Remedy. (3.) If you fay, that upon Repen-

<sup>(1)</sup> Page 41.

tauce and Reformation, such may hope for Mercy; provided that, they afterwards yield this universal and sincere Obedience. I would answer, that a Man guilty of Dissimulation and Lying, of Adultery and Murder, &c. fails of yielding a univerfal Obedience to the Law of God, and therefore, if any Person after Repentance commits fuch Sins, he cannot be just with God, if a universal Obedience is the Condition required to Justification. As yet I cannot be perfuaded, but that Abraham and David, &c. were accepted with God, though, I know, that they were guilty even after Repentance, of the Vices mentioned. 3. Such is the Rectitude of the Nature of God, that he cannot approve of Virtue, as imperfect, if he can, he may will and command it: For what he approves he may require, yea, he might make Man fuch, as he approves, and therefore, if he can accept of Men, as imperfect, he might have made Man imperfect. If this is true he did, for ought we know, or are able to prove to the contrary. He approves of virtuous Actions, as virtuous; but he disapproves of virtuous Actions, as they are imperfect. And it is only a perfectly holy Obedience that can be acceptable to him, and justify his Creatures in his Sight. He does not condemn Men, for doing an Act, which he commands; but he condemns them, for not performing that Act, in the Manner and with fuch Views as he requires them to do it. So he did Jehu. 4. It is false, that the original Constitution of our Nature was defective, if Respect is had to the Nature of Man, as he was created of God, for God made Man upright. If Regard is had to the Nature of Man in his fallen State, his Imperfection in the Constitution of his Nature, is the Effect of a Criminal Behaviour in Man, and therefore, that is no Excuse for the Defect of his Obedience to the Law. 5. What you mean by impartial Mercy I do not pretend to know. This is certain, that God is under no Obligation, to spare and pardon any Sinner. It is of his Sovereign Pleafure, that he hath Mercy on some; he had a Right to refuse it, and therefore, no Partiality is to be imputed to divine Mercy, if God does not accept of an imperfect Obedience from any Man, or if he condemns some for the Imperfection of their Obedience to his holy and just Law. Of impartial Justice I have some Idea, because Right is therein concerned; but I have none of impartial Mercy, because Mercy never acts upon the foot of Right, but freely. 6. Must Men for ever despair of Mercy, who have been guilty of voluntary and allowed Sins? This Reasoning leaves them without any Foundation of Hope, at all, and therefore it is most certainly false. 7. Impersect Virtue hath no fuch Loveliness and Worth in it, as to render it the fit Object of the peculiar Favour and Complacency of God. 'Tis furprizing, that any rational Creature can be fo far loft to a Sense of the infinite Holiness of the Nature of God, as once to imagine, that it hath, and it is R 2 much

much more fo, that he can express the Thought with fuch an Air of Confidence, as if it was, as evidently true, as any first Principle can be. Whatever hath fuch Loveliness and Worth in it, as renders it the fit and fuitable Object of the peculiar Favour and Complacency of God, he may undoubtedly be the Author of, for furely, God may effect that which is the Object of his peculiar Favour and Complacency. If imperfect Virtue is an Object fo pleafing to him, he may be the Author of our imperfect Virtue, which it is abfurd to think. Befides, no Pardon can have Place in what thus recommends itself to the peculiar Favour of the divine Being. Nor, is it any Act of Mercy to accept of our imperfect Obedience, and justify us on that Foundation: If it is thus lovely and valuable. I pass on to consider Mr. Foster's Objections to the Doctrine of the Imputation of Christ's Obedience to us for our Justification. And,

1. He objects, That God might of his Sovereign Pleasure have determined to impute the Rightcousness of another to Devils, and that, upon that Imputation, they would have been represented before the supreme Justice, as perfect, with the same strict Truth and Propriety, as sinful Men can be (\*). I do not here transcribe the whole of what he says, because the Strength of his Objection sufficiently appears without it.

I answer,

1. It is not faid or thought, that this Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to Men, changes

<sup>(&</sup>quot;) Page 42.

changes their Nature; it is only an Implantation of holy Principles into the Hearts of Men, that makes them inherently holy. We will grant him all he can defire on this Head, and give him full Liberty to make the most of it he is able.

2. Though this Imputation changes not the Natures of Men, it secures their complete Sanctification: So that it gives room to none to expect Happiness without Holiness.

3. It is accounting Men righteous who are not so in themselves; but are made so by the Imputation of the perfect Righteousness of

Christ to them.

The bleffed Jesus was our Surety, and paid our Debt, his Payment is reckoned to us, hence we are acquitted of our Guilt, and justified on the Foundation of what he did and suffered, as our Sponsor. Nor is there any thing absurd in this, more than there is in a Creditor's imputing to a Debtor the Payment of his Debt, by a Surety, and thereupon esteeming

him no longer a Debtor to himself.

3. Sinners, as in themselves, cannot be accounted righteous, because they are not really so; nor can be so made, inherently; for if once a Transgressor is made inherently righteous, he is no longer a Sinner. Mr. Foster must necessarily, therefore, if he will maintain the Justification of impersect sinful Men, he cannot avoid it, affert that God reckons them to be what they are not, in themselves, and what he does not make them, i. e. Righteous, without a

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Righteousness, personal, or imputative. Which

is a manifest Absurdity.

4. The Author speaks of this Imputation to Devils, perhaps, with a twofold View, (1.) To expose the Doctrine to Contempt; but this End cannot be answered by it; for that which fecures perfect Holiness to imperfect Creatures, will never be less valuable in itself, nor the less to be defired, because some Men are pleased to despise it. Besides, what Force of Reasoning is there in this Objection? None at all. It is no more than inferring, that, fince the Act of Imputation makes no inherent Change in the Subject of it, there can be no Imputation of another's Righteousness to a Sinner. The Force of the Objection therefore, will never affect the Truth, how much soever the Boldness of it may surprize serious and humble Minds, who dare not depend on their own Works for Acceptance with God; because of the Imperfections attending them, though it may be they might do this, with no more Danger than this Gentleman. (2.) This Objection might be started, that, the Author might have full Scope, to exercise his Rhetoric in drawing the Picture of an Apostate Creature, and at the same Time prevent his Hearers and Readers, thinking, that fallen Man is the Subject of that Rebellion, Malice and Envy, &c. which he imputes to Devils; left fuch a Representation of human Nature, should offend and weaken his Arguments to prove, that there is an innate Power in Men to do Good and obtain Happiness. Object. Object. 2. The Scriptures teach that, not Christ's Obedience; but our own Faith is imput-

ed to us for Righteoufness (5).

That Obedience by which Men Anlw. I. are made righteous is imputed to them, for that is the only possible way wherein we can be made righteous by the Obedience of another. We are made righteous by the Obedience of Christ, and consequently his Obedience is imputed to us, or made ours, by an Act of Sovereign Favour. Again, Righteoufness without Works is imputed us, that Righteousness cannot be our own personal Obedience to the Law of God, it must be the Obedience of another, because that is the only Sense, in which, it can be faid with Propriety, that Righteousness is without Works. Faith itself is not imputed; but the Object of it, as I hope, is fully and clearly proved in my Answer to Ruin and Recovery, to which I beg leave to refer the Reader for Satisfaction on this Point.

Object. 3. Then we are not in ourselves

moral and accountable Creatures (').

Answ. 1. Creatures subject to a Law are certainly accountable. Men are subject to a Law and eternally will be, and therefore, they will for ever be accountable, though not in order to the Acceptance of their Persons and the Enjoyment of Bliss. To this End, such to whom Christ's Righteousness is imputed, are not now accountable. 2. And, therefore, we

are not under the Law in order to Justification by our Performance of the Works of it. Christ is the End of the Law in this View to all his People. 3. But it no way follows from hence, that we are not obliged to practise the Duties of it. For our Obligation to obey the Law, arises not from the Promise of Reward annexed to its Precepts, in Case of Obedience; but from our Dependence on the Lawgiver, and his Command in his Law.

Object. 4. God can demand nothing more of us: Repentance, personal Reformation and in-

berent Rectitude are entirely needless (").

Answ. 1. God requires not Obedience in order to our Acceptance with him, if he should, we must perish inevitably. Because God cannot accept of and justify us; but upon our yielding a finless Obedience to his Law which we cannot do. 2. But still he requires Righteousness and Obedience of us, though not with a View to our Justification, as we obey, or to our Condemnation, as we disobey his holy and perfectly just Law. therefore, the Believer, is under an indispensable Obligation to Obedience, notwithstanding his Justification by the Righteousness of Christ. 4. The Saints are fo fully convinced of the intrinsic Excellence of Holiness, and of the Malignity of Sin—and they have fuch a Sense of divine Goodness, which has acted in their Fayour, that they most freely love and chuse Holiness, and detest and fortake Sin; though their most

most important Interest is fully and everlastingly secured by the Blood and Righteousness of Christ.

Object. 5. This Imputation of another's Righteousness makes not Men holy, &c. (\*).

Answ. 1. The Substance of this Objection has been before expressed, and it has been before answered. 2. It is allowed, that the Act of Imputation works no physical Change in us; the Reason is evident, it is an Act in God towards us, and not a divine Act put forth upon us. 3. We are not accounted righteous in ourselves, upon the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, but only as invested with that perfect Righteousness. 4. We shall be sanctified and made completely holy in Consequence of our Justification, by the Obedience of Christ imputed to us.

Object. 6. Christ's Obedience was wholly due for himself, and therefore, it cannot be im-

puted to any other Person (Y).

Answ. 1. Christ had a Right to Glory upon a higher Foundation, than that of his Obedience, viz. his personal Union with the Son of God. (The Doctrine of Christ's Deity Mr. Foster denies; but I beg leave to take it for granted in answering to this Objection) And therefore, Obedience was not required of him on his own Account. 2. He was made under the Law for us by a special Constitution or Appointment. 3. His Obedience to the Law, was therefore performed for us, and it is imput-

<sup>(</sup>x) Page 46.

ed to us in order to our Acceptance and Justification.

I defire to conclude this Subject with a ferious Address to the Reader. It is proper to think closely of the Holiness and Greatness of God our righteous Judge, before whom the Heavens are not clean, and who charges his Angels with Folly. He is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity. Sin is contrary to his infinitely pure Nature, he cannot, therefore, but abhor it. Due Apprehensions of divine Holiness, and Indignation against Sin, will raise in our Minds a holy Dread of appearing before God's awful Tribunal, where Justice we are fure will be administered with the utmost Impartiality and Strictness. Consider how many your Transgressions have been, what Duties you have neglected, and what Evils you have committed, and what Imperfections attend, even your best Services, what vain and wandering Thoughts, arise and gain upon your Mind in the most facred and solemn Duties, with what Coolness, and want of Love to the infinitely glorious Object of your devotional Acts, your religious Performances are mingled; as well as, how backward you have fometimes, and in some Instances been, to the Discharge of them. Consider with yourself the great Depravity of your Heart—what evil Habits it is the Subject of-what numberless unholy Conceptions it naturally forms, and then think, that you must stand before and be judged by an infinite Being, who hates all Sin.

Sin, and who perfectly knows all your Offences and Imperfections, and who cannot but disapprove of them. If you form a right Notion of God your just and righteous Judge, and of yourselves, as unholy and guilty, you will proceed with proper Caution in your Enquiries, about the Way of your Acceptance with him in Judgment. But if you have flight Thoughts of Sin, of divine Refentment against it, and flatter and relieve your Minds under a Consciousness of Guilt. and some Apprehensions of the Demerit of it, according to the Law, from a bare Confideration of divine Mercy without a proper Confideration, at the same Time, of divine Justice and Vengance against all Unrighteousness, no Wonder, if you content yourselves with slight and superficial Arguments, in Favour of Justification, by your own imperfect and defiled Obedience. But if these Things have their proper and necessary Weight with you, you will Tay, as holy Job did, How shall Man be just with God? You will be convinced, that it is impossible, that, he should be justified in his Sight by his own personal Obedience, because, that is imperfect and polluted, and God is infinitely pure and holy, and necessarily hates all Confider the Danger which attends being mistaken in this Point, that the Consequence will be more dreadful than Language can express, or the Mind conceive, if you reject that Way of Acceptance which God has provided

vided and appointed, you will certainly be condemned in Judgment, and inevitably fink into Ruin, into black Horror and Despair. If, therefore, there was but so much as a Probability of the Truth of the Doctrine of Justification by the Obedience of Christ, it would be the fafest, and, consequently, the wifest Method, when you have been as exact, watchful and regular in your Behaviour, as you poffibly could be, to renounce your own Works, with Respect to Justification in the Sight of God, and to depend folely and alone on the Blood and Righteousness of Christ for Pardon of Sin and Acceptance with God your supreme Judge. No Damage can attend this humble Acting of your Souls, you will not be the less accepted with God if you endeavour to obey him, though you should not think, that your imperfect Obedience recommends you to his Favour—you will not lose the Reward any may think is due to Virtue, because, you cannot be perfuaded, that fuch imperfect Virtue, as yours is, can be rewarded with the Glory of Heaven.

#### CHAP. XII.

# Of the Mediation of Christ.

HE Doctrine of the Mediation of Jesus Christ, is of the greatest Importance. It is the only Foundation of a fure and folid Hope, that Sinners can have of Reconciliation with God, and of enjoying him, the Origin of all Bleffedness. And it is divine Revelation alone, which can give us an Affurance, that God will pardon and fave rebellious Creatures; and inform us in what Way Criminals may be accepted with God, and rendered happy, confistent with the Honour of all his Perfections. As has been before observed, the Light of Nature is sufficient to acquaint us, in some Measure, with our deplorable State, in Confequence of Sin; but here it leaves us, and cannot be a Guide to our Recovery and Happiness: And, therefore, in our Enquiries into the Doctrine of the Mediation of Christ, it is irrational to appoint Reason to judge and determine concerning the Nature, Efficiency, and Ends of his mediatorial Actions. In this Affair, imperfect Reason is wholly ignorant, and necessarily must be, because Reason, in its State of Persection, could

could only know, that God would certainly accept of the unerring Obedience of his perfect Creatures. Reason, in that State, could not poffibly refolve, whether, upon a Breach of the Law, God would execute the Threatning denounced against Disobedience, or whether he would pardon and fave: Much lefs, had it any Means of knowing what Method would be the fittest and best to take, in order to recover from deferved Ruin; and, confequently, it is not rational to constitute imperfect Reason a Judge in these Matters. Let us then humbly submit our Reason to the Discoveries of Revelation, relating to these Points, and embrace without any Scruple, the Doctrine of the holy Scriptures concerning those Subjects.

I. Sin or moral Impurity is contrary to the holy Nature of God, and he cannot but be displeased with it. His righteous Soul necesfarily abhors that filthy Thing Sin. He is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity, without Indignation, and awful Resentment. A holy Man views moral Turpitude, with Detestation: The Malignity of the evil Nature of Sin excites his utmost Hatred, and causes him to wish for its utter Destruction. And can we think, that infinite Rectitude is able to spare and bear it in Sight? We must be strangely funk in our Notions of the Holiness of God, or be under the Influence of strong Prejudice in Favour of ourselves, as Creatures guilty and vile, if we make a Difficulty of allowing, that

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moral Imperfection is the Object of the infinite

Abhorrence of God our supreme Judge.

II. All Mankind are Sinners: Human Nature has lost its original Righteousness, and is become the Subject of innumerable vile Lusts. Men universally have erred from the Way of Holiness, and gone into the Paths of Sin. We have all sinned, and come short of the Glory of God. Not an innocent Person is to be found among the human Race. Who of Mankind, can say with Truth, my Heart is pure, my Hands are unpolluted, and I have done no Iniquity? Not one; we are all guilty in the sight of God, and deserve his Displeasure. If he should be strict to mark Iniquity, none of the human Species would be able to stand. Confequently,

fequently,

III. No Man can be approved of God, and justified in his Sight, considered in himself.

Our righteous Judge cannot account us that which we are not, nor are made; if, there-

fore, we are Criminals, he cannot esteem us innocent and obedient, nor reward us for our Actions. If our Conduct really merits his Displeasure, it is impossible that it should interest us in his Approbation and Favour. God

undoubtedly forms a right Judgment of, and puts a true Value upon Actions; if, therefore, it is possible for him to accept of Services, that are tinctured with Sin, as so considered, what Assurance can we have, that he will not some

Tincture? If he is able to approve the guilty,

as fuch, how may we be certain, that the innocent will never be the Objects of his Dislike and Aversion? It is as rational to think, that infinite Wisdom may be delighted with Folly, as to imagine, that infinite Holiness can approve of Imperfection. And, therefore, no Person among us, can be accepted with the God of Truth and Holiness, as considered in himself. We are all, without Exception, obnoxious to his dreadful Anger: And it would be just in him to punish every one of us, with everlasting Destruction, from his Presence, and the Glory of his Power. He will, by no means, clear the guilty, without a proper Provision for the maintaining his Authority in the Law, and the Vindication of his Holiness and Justice in doing it. God is a consuming Fire, and so we shall certainly find him, unless his Justice is fatisfied; to the Refentment of which we have exposed ourselves, by the Omission of Duties, and the imperfect Manner, wherein we have performed every Act of Obedience, and by the Perpetration of numerous Crimes.

IV. The Goodness of God lays him under no Obligation to provide for the Recovery, of his Creatures, who have destroyed themselves by Sin. For it is no Reslection on his Goodness, to permit Justice to take Place in the Instiction of deserved Penalty. The guilty suffering Creature, will not have Cause to charge God with Cruelty, under the greatest Tortures Justice shall instict for Sin. It is Matter of free Choice with God, whether the criminal Creature

Creature shall be spared or punished. To pardon and save a Sinner is Mercy, or it is the Exercise of the Attribute of Mercy; but as no Offender can plead a Right to Impunity, it must wholly be resolved into the Sovereign Will of God, if he shews Mercy to any Transgressor. It is no Act of Unkindness to resolve upon the Execution of the Threatning of the Law against Sin: And, therefore, the Goodness of God may perfectly consist with his punishing of Men, who have rendered themselves worthy of Death, by

a Violation of his holy and just Law.

V. Unless God had provided for our Recovery and Salvation, which he was not obliged to do, our State would have been inevitably miserable. We were absolutely unable to raise ourselves out of those Depths of Misery, into which our Sins have plung'd us. Man can by any Means redeem his Brother, nor give to God a Ransom for him: The Redemption of the Soul is precious, and it ceases for ever; i. e. with Man (a). Who could bear the Weight of the Guilt of Sin, without finking under it? Who of Mankind could sustain the dreadful Curse that Sin demerits, and not be miserable? What Person could stand under the Wrath of the Almighty, and not faint under that insupportable Weight? Not one among Stubble might as foon refift the Force of devouring Fire, as we endure the flaming Vengance of an angry God. A few Drops of divine Wrath let fall upon us, give us inexpreffible

<sup>(1)</sup> Pfal. xlix. 7, 8.

Pressible Torture; what Agonies therefore, must the sull Flow of that scorching Fury throw us into? If the present View of the Terrors of a holy incensed God distracts us, how shall we be able to endure the terrible sull Prospect of his infinite Displeasure against our Sins? It is no Mistake, that God is infinitely offended with our Crimes. His Indignation against Sin, is not the mere Imagination of a melancholy and disordered Mind, 'tis real; and so we shall find it, to our endless Consusion, if we do not see for Refuge, to lay hold on the Hope set before us, in the Gospel of his Grace.

VI. The good Will and Favour of God caused him to resolve upon the Salvation and Happiness of some of his guilty Creatures, not apostate Spirits, but sinful Men. Not all Mankind; but a Part of the human Race. These Persons he loved with an everlasting Love, and his eternal Grace, Goodness and Mercy, is the Source from which their Recovery and endless Bliss spring. Nothing in them could induce him to fave and render them happy: For all their Holiness, which is their Meetness for Heaven, is the Effect, and not the Caufe of his chufing them to Salvation. Because they are ordained to everlasting Life, they believe (b). Because they are chosen to Salvation, they are sanctified by the Spirit (c). So that their Holiness is the Refult of their eternal Election in Christ (d), and not

<sup>(</sup>b) Acts xiii. 48. (c) 2 Theff. ii. 13. (d) Eph. i. 4.

not the Foundation on which that divine Decree is built. Their holy Vocation is according to that gracious Purpose formed in the divine Mind concerning them (°); and, there fore, the Foresight of Holiness in them, could not be the Reason why God determined to save them.

VII. Tho' the fovereignly gracious God, decreed to deliver them from Sin, and all the penal Effects of it, and to confer Honour and Happiness upon them; his Wisdom directed to provide for the Glory of all his Attributes in the Accomplishment of that Decree. His Grace would triumph in their Recovery, but Justice would not allow, that it should be upon its Ruins. Goodness would shine with an amazing Lustre, in their Salvation; but Holiness would not permit its Glory to be obscured and veil'd in their Recovery. Divine Mercy would magnify itself in their Remiffion, but Righteousness infisted upon the Punishment of Sin; that Sinners might be faved in fuch a Way as would not be to its Prejudice. Infinite Wisdom alone could provide an Expedient for answering the just Demands of each Perfection, and for preferving an entire Harmony among the divine Attributes, in the great Affair of Salvation. As God alone could do this, he has made fuch Provision.

VIII. God chose and constituted Christ to be a Days-man and Mediator, between him-self and the People whom he intended to save:

S 2 For

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) 2 Tim. i. 9.

For this Reason our Saviour is spoken of under the Character of the Father's Elect: Behold my Servant whom I uphold, mine Elect in whom my Soul delighteth (1). He chose him from among the People; and ordained him to this Office: Who verily was fore-ordained before the Foundation of the World (5). Christ on his Part freely took this Office upon himself, and voluntarily engaged to do and suffer whatever the Law and Justice required, in order to the eternal Salvation of those Persons, in a Way becoming all the divine Persections: Hence he is stilled the Surety of a better Testa-

ment (h).

IX. Our Redeemer has all the Requisites of a Mediator between God and Sinners: Or he is in every Respect, what it was necessary, that the Mediator should be. 1. He is Man, and the Son of Man. It was proper, that he who undertook to fave Sinners of the human Race, should be Man, not only because Justice required a Satisfaction in the fame Nature that had finned; but also that he might be fit to be an Head to those Persons, he was to save and bear the tenderest Affection to them: For these Reasons he was made of a Woman, and so he was the Son of Man, as well as of the human Species. 2. Our Saviour was a holy innocent Man. Innocency was a necessary Qualification in the Redeemer. For, no Offender is able to fatisfy for his own Offences, much less

<sup>(</sup>f) Ifa. xlii. 2-

<sup>(</sup>h) Heb. vii. 22.

<sup>( ) 1</sup> Pet. i. 20.

less, can he fatisfy for the Sins of others. Christ is an High-Priest, that becomes us, as he is, boly, barmless and undefiled. The first Adam was not an Head to him, or he did not reprefent him; and therefore, tho' he was to be Man, and the Son of Man, yet he was not to be conceived in a natural Way, as all those are, to whom Adam was a Representative: If he had so been, he could not have escaped that Pollution, which attends all his natural Descendants. His being separate from Sinners, in his Conception, is the true Reason of the Holiness of his Nature. 3. He is God: It was absolutely necessary that the Saviour of Sinners should possess infinite Perfections, that an infinite Merit might attend his Obedience and Sufferings. Sin hath fuch Demerit in it, as the Object is against whom it is committed: And, therefore, greater Punishment is due to Sin against God, than is due to Sin against a Creature; and by the same Reason that Penalty in any Degree greater, is demerited by finning against God, than against a Creature, infinite Punishment must become due by transgressing his Law, because he is infinitely great and glorious. Our gracious Mediator is God, and equal in Majesty to our righteous and offended Judge. He is the Brightness of the Father's Glory, and the express Image of bis Person (1). God over all, blessed for ever (1). Bing in the Form of God, he thought it no

<sup>(</sup>i) Heb. i. 3.

<sup>(1)</sup> Rom. ix. 6.

Robbery to be equal with God ('). He is the

true God, and et rnal Life (").

Being Man he was capable of obeying and fuffering; and being also God, his Obedience and Sufferings are of infinite Value. For fuch as the Person is, who obeys and suffers; such in Dignity and Worth are his Obedience and Sufferings. As our Lord, who obeyed and fuffered for us, was infinitely great; his Obedience and Sufferings are infinitely valuable. And, therefore, the Law is magnified and made honourable, by his Subjection to it, obeying of it, and fuffering its Curfe. Again, unless our Saviour is God; he cannot have a complete Knowledge of all the Wants of all his People, nor can he supply them. Christ fearches the Hearts, and tries the Reins of Men; and, confequently, he must be acquainted with all the Necessities of his Saints, and is able to supply them. Besides, divine Power is necessary to be exercised in their Favour, to preferve them in Dangers, to support them under Difficulties, and to prevent their Ruin; feeing that they are encompassed with numerous, potent, and malicious Enemies. The united Force of Sin, Satan, and the World cannot destroy them, because their Redeemer, is the mighty God, he is the Lord of Hosts. They are faved by the Lord their God, and David their King. 4. The divine and human Nature are most intimately united in Christ. The Word was made Flesh ("); and the Obedience and

<sup>(1)</sup> Phil. ii. 6. (11) 1 John v. 20. (11) John i. 14.

Sufferings of our Saviour, are to be confidered as the Obedience and Sufferings of his entire Person: Of his human Nature, subjectively; of his divine, relatively; or as it is in Union, and concurred with the human Nature in obeying and suffering: For which Reason his Blood

is called the Blood of God.

The Work affigned to Christ our Mediator, was most important to the Glory of God, and the Good of his People. We may observe, that it is different according to three distinct Offices, which our glorious Mediator acts in. The mediatorial Office is general, and includes his Sacerdotal, Prophetic, and Kingly Offices. In this Order I speak of them, because it is in this Method I desire to treat of those Offices.

1. He was a Priest: Thou art a Priest for ever, after the Order of Melchisedec (°). He is the Apostle and High-Priest of our Profession (P). Our bleffed Lord, did not glorify bimself, to be made an High-Priest; but be that faid unto him, thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee (9). The Father invested him with this Office. And he was a Prieft, when on the Earth, or before his Ascension to Heaven. The Objection which Socinian Writers make to this, taken from these Words of the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews: For if he were on the Earth, he should not be a Priest, feeing that there are Priests, that offer Gifts according to the Law (1), is very weak and trifling.

<sup>(°)</sup> Pfalm cx. 4.

<sup>( )</sup> Ibid. v. 5.

<sup>(</sup>P) Heb. iii. 1.

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Ibid viii. 4.

trifling. The Intention of the holy Writer, is to prove, that the Messiah was to be a Priest, but not of the Order of Aaron; nor to officiate in any of the Services which the Priests were called to by the Law; or that he could not be a Priest according to the Law, because the Law limited the Priesthood to the Tribe of Juda, of which Tribe Jesus was not; and, therefore, by the Law he could not be a Priest at all. His Defign is not to prove, that while Christ was on the Earth, he was not a Priest; but to prove, that he could not be in the prieftly Office according to the Law; because the Law restrained that Office to mortal Men on the Earth, who were of the Tribe beforementioned, of which Tribe he was not; and confequently, fince he was a Prieft, he must be constituted such by another Appointment; and to act in a higher Sphere, and to far more noble Ends, than any of those Priests did or could do: Who were made Priests, after the Law of a carnal Commandment, and not after the Power of an endless Life (5), which Christ was. This is the clear, strong and conclusive Reasoning of the divine Writer in this Place. His Work, as a Prieft, confifts of two Branches. (1.) To offer a Sacrifice for Sin. Offering of Sacrifice enters into the Nature of the facerdotal Office; no Man can be a Priest without it. Wherefore, as the holy Writer says, it is of Necessity, that this Man bave somewhat to offer; otherwise he could not be

be a Priest. It was not required of him to offer Bulls, or Goats, or Beafts of any Kind, in Sacrifice, for it was not possible, that the Blood of Bulls or of Goats should take away Sin; by whomsoever they were offered to God in Sacrifice. But it was expected of him to offer himself as a Sacrifice: His own Blood he must shed, his own Life he must resign, if he will answer the important Ends of his Constitution to this Office. He most freely consented to the Will of God, in this Matter, and agreed to become a Victim, a bloody Sacrifice for finful Men; fo great was his Love to them, and so intense was his Desire to save them. His Father's Pleafure, and his own voluntary Engagement to fuffer, laid him under an Obligation, not to be dispensed with, to die. Ought not Christ to bave suffered these Things, and to enter into his Glory ('). He stood obliged to lay down his Life for the Sheep, by the Commandment of the Father, and in Confequence of his own free Promife. In dying he was a Sacrifice for Sin. For, the Sins of others were imputed to him. The Lord laid on him the Iniquity of us all ("). He knew no Sin; but was made Sin for us (\*). He bore our Sins in his own Body on the Tree ( ). The Charge on him of the Guilt of the Perfons for whom he died, was prefigured by the Priest's Confession of Sin over the Heads of the Beasts, which were facrificed under the Law. They

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Luke xxiv. 26.

<sup>(</sup>x) 2 Cor. v. 21.

<sup>(°)</sup> Ifa. liii. 6.

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) 1 Pet. ii. 24.

They bore it typically, only; but Christ bore

it really.

Again, in Consequence of the Imputation of Guilt to him, he became liable to the Curse due to it, or obnoxious to Penalty. His Sufferings were properly penal, as all suffering under a Charge of Guilt, or in Consequence of an Imputation of it to any Subject, must necessarily be. And, therefore, he was made a Curse, or that Condemnation of the Law, which follows upon the Breach of its Precepts, was inflicted on him in suffering, in the Stead of Sinners and for their Transgressions: Being

made a Curse for us.

Farther, he endured the Displeasure of the Father, who, as a righteous Judge, was infinitely offended with Sin. The Sword, not of a Creature, but of God himself, was commanded to awake against and smite him. His Father, when he was mocked by wicked Men. and in Torture, and forfook by all his Friends, hid his Face from him, which affected and grieved him more, than all the other afflictive Circumstances, that attended him on the Cross. These Things clearly prove, that he underwent the Punishment due to the Persons for whom he died, and, therefore, we may conclude upon the Truth of the Particulars following,— That Guilt is expiated, or that Transgression is finished, and Sin made an End of, relating to those Persons for whom he suffered: He purged our Sins, or put them away by the Sacrifice of himself: And, bath perfected for ever them that

that are sanctified.—That those on whose Account he died, or became a Victim, a bloody Sacrifice, are redeemed from Condemnation: Who shall condemn it is Christ that died.—That they therefore, shall not come into Condemnation, or suffer Punishment: Being justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath through him (2). He has obtained eternal Redemption, and made Reconciliation and Peace by the Blood of his Cross: Or by giving himself an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling

Savour (a).

(2.) The other Branch of the Work of Christ as a Priest is, his making Intercession for us, which was typified by the Entrance of the High-Priest into the Sanctuary, with the Blood of those Beasts that were offered in Sacrifice, and sprinkling of it before the 'Mercy-Seat. Our bleffed Lord is not entred into the boly Places made with Hands, which were the Figures of the true; but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the Presence of God for us (b). He is a Priest upon his Throne, or in his exalted State, and ever lives to make Intercession for us. As Christ was our propitiatory Sacrifice, he is also our Advocate with the Father. And, as such he pleads our Cause, and will thoroughly plead it. For his Intercession is founded in Justice, and of Right he may expect to be heard and answered of the Father, in every Petition he prefents to him in our Favour: Not only, as he has

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Rom. v. 9.

<sup>(</sup>c) Col. i. 20. Eph. v. 2.

<sup>()</sup> Heb. ix. 24.

has finished the whole of what was required, that he should do and suffer, to obtain eternal Redemption for us; but also, as his Obedience and Sufferings are an Equivalent for the Justification of our Persons, our Deliverance from Punishment, and the Fruition of Blessedness. and, confequently, we may most affuredly conclude upon his Ability to fave to the uttermost, from his ever living to intercede. His Intercession being founded on what he did and suffered while on Earth, it is limited to the Persons for whom he obeyed and suffered, who are the Elect of God. Hence the Apoftle argues from the Intercession of Christ, the Security of the Chosen of God, without the least mention of any other: Who shall lay any Thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth, who shall condemn? It is Christ that died; yea, rather that is rifen again, who is even at the Right-hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us (c). Agreeably to this, our Lord when on the Earth, declared, that he prayed not for the World; but for those, who were given to him by the Father (d). And his Interceffion in their Favour, is equal in Extent to the Merit of his Obedience and Sufferings for them. What he merited, by obeying and dying, he has a proper Right to ask, and his People may be certain that they shall receive. His Obedience to the Law merited their Justification, and all those Bleffings of Grace and Glory, which are consequent upon

<sup>(1)</sup> Rom. viii. 33, 34. (1) John xvii. 9.

upon their Justification before God, by the Imputation of his Righteoufness. His Sufferings for them merited their Pardon, Peace, and eternal Redemption. And, therefore, our Saviour may demand whatever is necessary to their Happiness, he accordingly does. Father, I will, that they also, whom thou hast given me, may be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory (c). In Justice the Father cannot but communicate future Bleffedness to them, fince Christ may claim it for them on the Foot of Right, arising from his Obedience and Death.

2. Our Saviour is the great Prophet of the Church. Moses speaks of him under this Character: The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet, like unto me, from the midst of thee, unto him shall ye bearken (1). He is very fitly qualified for this Office: For he was in the Bosom of the Father, and acquainted with all the fecret Purposes of his eternal Love and Wisdom, and he hath declared his Name: Or his Grace, Goodness, and Sovereign Favour, and all the wife Counfels and Actings thereof. When he was in this World, he published the Will and gracious Purposes of his Father about his People, and their Security and certain Happiness upon that folid Foundation, in many of his public Sermons, which will admit of the clearest and most easy Proof. Since his being in Heaven, he has given some Apostles, some Prophets, some Evangelists, some Pastors and Teachers:

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) John xvii. 24. (') Deut. xviii. 13.

Teacher's; the three former were extraordinary Officers in the primitive Church, whose Business it was to convey to Men the Knowledge of the divine Will, and to form the Saints into Bodies or distinct Churches, and to give them Direction in all Things relating to the Glory of God, and their mutual Edification: The two latter are ordinary Ministers, whose Work it is, to teach, feed, and guide Societies of Chriftians according to Rules prescribed in the New Testament for those Purposes. Besides, our bleffed Redeemer fends his Spirit, to enlighten the Minds of his People, to comfort and guide them, in this State of Imperfection, Danger, and Difficulty. The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him, enlightens the Eyes of their Understanding, and enables them to know what is the Hope of his Calling, and and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints (8). This internal Revelation of divine Truths, is necessary to be superadded to the external Revelation of them in the Word, in order to an Acquaintance with the excellent Nature, Importance, and Glory of those Truths: For the natural Man receiveth not the Things of the Spirit of God, they are Foolishness to him, neither can be know them, because they are spiritually discerned (h).

(3.) Christ is the King, whom God has set on his holy Hill of Sion: And he rules in Righteousness (1). In this Character, he has conquered

<sup>(</sup>i) Pfal. ii. 6. Ifa. xxxii. 1. (h) 1 Cor. ii. 14.

conquered all the Enemies of his Church, Sin, Satan, the World and Death. In the Execution of this Office, he subdues the rebellious Hearts of his People, and makes them willing to fubmit to his Authority, as well as, to depend on his Grace, Blood, and Righteoufnefs, in the Day of his Power. Again, he gives Laws to them, and demands a chearful Obedience of them to those Laws. Farther, he defends their Persons in all Dangers, and preferves his Subjects fafe, though the Number, Power, and Malice of their Enemies are great. Once more, he confers the highest Honour upon them: For he makes them Kings, appoints unto them a Kingdom, and gives them Crowns of the brightest and never declining Lustre and Glory.

Upon the whole, it is evident, that Christ in all his Offices, acts for the Good, Safety and Happiness of his People: Or, that the everlafting Salvation and eternal Felicity of the Church, is intended in the Medition of Christ; and that it is effectually secured in the Execution of his priestly, prophetic, and kingly Offices, in Subordination to the Glory of the divine Persons and divine Persections. that discerns the Importance and amazing Glory of this Constitution, and seriously considers how rich Grace, infinite Wisdom, Justice, and Holiness, Truth and Faithfulness illustriously shine herein, to the Amazement of Angels, and the everlafting Joy and Rapture of the Saints, who I fay can forbear faying as Withus does? Thefe

These are the tremendous Mysteries of our holy Religion, kept fecret in Ages past, but now made manifest by the Scriptures of the Prophets, according to the Commandment of the eternal God, published throughout all Nations for the Obedience of Faith. Hence the Divinity of the Christian Religion is evidently clear. What Wisdom of Men, what Wisdom of Angels, could devise these Things, that are so deep, so sublime, and in so bigh a Degree exceed all the Understanding of all Creatures? How does the adoreable Wisdom of God, Justice, Holiness, Truth, Goodness, Philanthropy, here display itself, in finding, appointing, and completing this Method of our Salvation? How calmly a Conscience, pressed with the Burden of Sin, may rest in such a Surety, in such an Engagement? Here observing this Method of our Reconciliation, worthy of God, and safe and secure for Man. Who that contemplates these Things in the Light of the Spirit will not break forth into the Praise of the most holy, the most just, the most true, and the most high God? O! the Depth of the Riches of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! O! the Mysteries which Angels defire to look into! Glory be to the Father, who provided, admitted, gave such a Surety! Glory be to the Son, who clothing himself with buman Flesh according to his Engagement and Promise, so freely, so patiently, and so couragiously died for us! Glory be to the holy Spirit the Revealer, the Witness, and the Earnest of so great Happiness! Be thou exalted, O Christ Jesus, true and eternal

eternal God, true and boly Man, and both united, and the Properties of each Nature preserved in a Unity of Person. We confess thee, we worship thee, we apply ourselves to thee, at thy Feet we lay ourselves, from thy Hand only we expect Salvation, thou only Saviour. We desire to be thy peculiar Portion, and by thy Grace we are, and shall eternally remain. Let the whole World of thy Elect know thee, acknowledge thee with us, and so by thee be saved. This is the whole of Faith, this is the whole of Hope, this is the whole of our Desire, Amen. Oecon. Foed. Lib. II. Cap. 4.

I shall now attend to what Mr. Foster delivers on this most important and glorious Subject, which fills the Angels with Astonishment, engages their strictest Attention, and is an eternal Spring of Comfort, Joy, and bliss-

ful Delight to the Saints.

a Scheme entirely new; but that it is closely connected and interwoven with the essential Branches of the Religion of Nature (\*). Answ. This is not true according to our Principles, nor his own. Upon our Principles it cannot be true, for natural Religion, knows nothing at all of a Saviour, nor of Salvation, by the Obedience and Sufferings, or Mediation of Jesus Christ, and, consequently, not of Acts, of Faith and Hope in him, nor of Love and Obedience to him: All which are founded on his Person, mediatorial Engagements, and Acts, and those precious Benefits we receive from him, as our only Media.

<sup>(</sup>k) Vol. IV. of Sermons, p. 392.

Mediator and Saviour. It is false, even upon his own Principles; for his Opinion of the mediatorial Scheme, is so far from being a Revival of the Religion of Nature, that it is a base and wretched Corruption of it. Natural Religion teaches us perfect Love to God, and our Neighbour; and that moral Imperfection is displeafing to him, and subjects us to his awful Anger. Mr. Foster maintains, that God, according to this Constitution, accepts, justifies, and rewards guilty Men, upon the Foundation of their own Works.—That he accepts of fincere Obedience, in the Room of perfect; which is not agreeable to the pure Religion of untainted Nature; but it certainly is a great Depravation of it. In divine Revelation. natural Religion is delineated, and fet forth in all its Beauties; and it superadds the Christian Religion to that. This Gentleman denies almost every Branch of the latter, and he gives a deformed Representation of the former.

2. The Author complains much of this Doctrine having been grofsly misrepresented.—
God, says he, considered in himself, has been described as an Object of Horror, and absolutely inaccessible by his frail offending Creatures ('). And he dares to pass this bold Censure on that Description of God. An unnatural Imputation, and most absurdly blasphemous ("). This is a Home-thrust, 'tis a daring Stroke. Let him see to it, how he will defend this impious Censure

<sup>(1)</sup> Page 395.

Censure, in a certain Time to come. If it is not agreeable to the pure Nature of God, to approve of moral Impurity; it is no unnatural Imputation to describe him, as inaccessible by fuch as are the Subjects of moral Turpitude, in themselves considered. If it is an Act of Justice in God to punish and drive from his most holy Presence, those who sin against him; it is not Blasphemy to affert, that an offending Creature, as fo confidered, or in himfelf, cannot with Safety appear before the divine Tribunal. And that it is a righteous Thing with God, to recompense Sin with Tribulation, a very short Time will convince this Person, and all other Men, who may doubt of it now. Thro' Ignorance, Self-Love, Pride and Prejudice, he and others, may at prefent flatter themselves, that an Appearance before the most holy, and the most high God, tho' they are Criminals, will not be attended with any Danger: But if they are not convinced of this Mistake, and flee for Refuge to the great Mediator, they will most certainly find it a dreadful, a fatal one. It would be infinitely less bold and presumptuous in a Rebel to infift upon it, that without Fear or Shame, he may approach the Presence of his Sovereign, tho' he has rebelled against his Crown and Dignity; than it is for finful Men to stand upon it, that without Terror they may enter the Presence of the infinite Majesty of Heaven, notwithstanding their Rebellion against him. It is no Dishonour to God, to T 2 represent

represent him as an Object of Dread and Terror to guilty Creatures; but it is a just Assertion of his eternal, infinite, and invariable Righteousness. He can't be just if he is not

a Terror to evil Doers, as so considered.

He asks a very impertinent Question, and vainly flourishes and insults, as if he was militating against the most evident Absurdity. Where, fays he, can Access be had, if not to infinite Mercy (1)? Answ. It is to God, as infinitely merciful and gracious, that guilty Creatures must apply with Hopes of Acceptance, and the Communication of Favours to them. What is undeferved; free Mercy alone bestows on the deservedly miserable. This is freely granted. But if he had put a Query fuitable to the Point in Hand, it must have been this: May not rebellious Creatures hope for Mercy, without any Provision for the Honour, and maintaining the Rights of Justice? If he proves any Thing to the Purpose, he must prove this; that divine Mercy may exercise itself, in Favour of finful Men, without any Method taken to answer the Demands of Justice. This he has not yet proved, nor will he ever be able to give Proof of it. That is a Principle he begs and takes for granted, without fo much as the least Attempt to confirm it, either from Reason or Revelation. As to what he says of Men shewing Mercy to Offenders (°); it is a Weakness in them, not to be able to exercise Justice at the same Time, that they extend Mercy

<sup>(</sup>n) Page 395.

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 396.

Mercy to Criminals. It is a Weakness attending human Nature, not to be capable of supporting the Rights of Justice, when they thew Clemency towards the Guilty. Wisdom, if it was in their Power, would always direct them to shew Favour to Transgressors, in such a Way, as that the Authority and Sanction of their Laws might be fully established in doing it. But fince that it is not in their Power, in all Cases, wherein Mercy is extended to Offenders; they are obliged to act differently to what the Laws in Force direct, however just and equitable they are. Seeing it is the wifest Way, fo to exercise Mercy, as at the same Time to maintain the Rights of Justice; it is reasonable to conclude, that God who is infinitely wife and just, will never be merciful to his guilty Creatures, but in fuch a Way, as that Justice shall not be obliged to give up any Part of its Right, or its Glory be in the leaft veil'd; and that he is capable of being clement and favourable to Offenders, in fuch a Way, tho' Men are not.

He adds, Or if the supreme Being be, in particular Cases, averse to all Commiseration; dare any inferior Being presume to intercede as a Mediator? To distate Mercy to him, that is all-perfect; to attempt to make more compliable, to sooth, and mollify him into greater Benignity and Indulgence? If God be in himself, an unchangeable and unerring Pattern of every Thing that is right and sit; would not such a Mediator act an indecent, nay, an immoral Part?

T 3 Would

Would be not behave in a Manner unbecoming an intelligent Being, if he should sue for Mercy, any farther than God is by Nature merciful (P)? Anjw. 1. If God was averse to all Commiseration, a Mediator would never have been provided. It was free Mercy, Goodness and Grace, that appointed Christ Mediator; to the End that Mercy might be glorified confistent with Justice, in the Pardon and Salvation of finful Men. 2. Our Saviour in his Intercession, does not intreat God to be more merciful and kind, than it is agreeable to his most merciful Nature to be, towards his guilty Creatures, in a Way of Justice. And fince Christ became Mediator and Intercessor, as an Effect of divine Love and Goodness; it is not thought, that God is prevailed with, in Consequence of his Intercession, to shew Mercy, not having before a Disposition to exercise it. And, therefore, Mr. Foster, after his usual Manner, trifles most egregiously. 3. The Intercession of our bleffed Lord, being founded on the Perfection of his Satisfaction; he asks for no larger and more extensive Exercise of Mercy, than confifts with Justice; and, confequently, in his Intercession, he acts no indecent and immoral Part; nor in a Manner unbecoming an intelligent Being. Nothing farther is asked of God, than he is inclined to bestow; and he is not defired to communicate his Favours, in a Way unfuitable to his own Perfections. And, therefore, our Advocate in pleading for us, fully supports his Character of righteous. If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the

Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (9).

On the contrary, if any Circumstances could be supposed, in which the supreme Model of every Thing truly worthy and noble, might be imagined to be, effentially confidered unpropitious and inaccessible; is it not undeniably certain. that the Mediator also ought to be inaccessible? Or can the Deity be degraded by the Exercise of Compassion, in the very same Case, in which the Mediator is exalted and dignified, by pleading for Compassion (1)? Answ. Tho' God is inacceffible by guilty Creatures, without a Satisfaction given to his Law and Justice for their Offences; yet upon the Ground of the Satisfaction of Christ, he not only may, but he certainly will admit Sinners into his glorious Presence, and receive them to himself; for Justice itself directs to this merciful, kind and gracious acting towards them upon that Foundation. And, therefore, the Mediator may be addressed with Boldness and Freedom, by those for whose Sins he made Atonement, and the Father also may thro' him: We have Boldness and Access with Confidence by the Faith of bim (5). Again, God is not degraded by shewing Compassion, consistent with Justice: None suppose that he is: Nor does the Mediator petition him to be kind to Sinners, at the Expence of his Righteousness. It would be a T 4 great

<sup>(9) 1</sup> John ii. 1.

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 396, 397.

<sup>(5)</sup> Eph. iii. 12.

great Dishonour to our gracious and merciful Intercessor to imagine he does. Our Author concludes his negative Account of this Matter with faying, must not our bumble Supplications, even when they are offered thro' a Mediator, be ultimately presented to the divine Mercy? If so, it then necessarily follows, that the true Ground on which the mediatorial Scheme was established, could not be, that God was in himself, either too terrible, or too resentful, or too inexorable, to be directly addressed and invocated (1). Anjw. Prayer is directed to divine Mercy, as exercifing itself on the Foundation of Christ's Atonement and Satisfaction; and, therefore, in a Way confistent with Justice. But God cannot be invocated by a Sinner, out of Christ, with any folid Hope of being heard, accepted and answered. Yet it is not the Mediation of Christ, that causes a Will in God to be kind and favourable to his People. The Constitution of Christ a Mediator, is the gracious Effect of an eternal Purpose in God, to shew Mercy to Sinners; and supposes a Will in him to fave them, prior in Order of Nature to that Appointment. But the Mediation of Christ is the only Way, wherein Justice as well as Mercy can be exercised in their Recovery; which it became the infinite Wifdom of God to provide for the Vindication of, in this great Affair. And, therefore, tho' the Death of Christ did not procure a Will in God, to be reconciled to Sinners; yet, fince he

he cannot without neglecting the Rights of his Justice treat them in a merciful Manner, except upon the Foundation of the Propitiation of Christ; it evidently follows, that God cannot be addressed and invocated by Transgressors out of him, to his own Glory, and their

everlafting Peace and Happiness.

Mr. Foster proceeds, positively, to give us an Account of his Opinion, in Relation to this momentous Subject. And, he fays thus, The true Christian Doctrine of a Mediator, the Substance of which is; that our blessed Saviour was appointed by the supreme Authority of Heaven and Earth, to reconcile apoltate and rebellious Men (these are harsh Terms, but we don't often meet with them) to their offended (another hard Word) Maker and Sovereign; and to be the Distributer of God's Favours to Mankind ("). Then he observes, that it is probable, that Christ did not stand in the Character of a Mediator, till after his Exaltation, (which is a Socinian Tenet,) and feveral Things to clear up this Appointment from some Objections, wherewith we have no Concern at prefent: Next he explains what is intended by afcribing Reconciliation and Remission to the Death of Christ: And fays, that it is the undeniable Doctrine of the new Testament, that the Death of Christ, was not intended to render the Deity propitious ("): None suppose it was, which I have before obferved. The whole Use and Efficacy of it, adds he, springs from his appointing and declaring

ring it to be an accepted Sacrifice (\*). If it is fo, then the Death of Christ, in its own Nature, had nothing of a Fitness in it to atone for Sin: It was merely an arbitrary Act in God to appoint it to fuch a Use. It was not then in Reality a Sacrifice, or it was not fo in itself, only God accepted it as such. Than which two Particulars the Gentleman will never be able to express any Thing more false, and contradictory to the current Sense of the new Testament. Those Writings tell us, that Christ is facrificed for us (v).—That he gave himself for us an Offering and a Sacrifice (2). That he put away Sin, by the Sacrifice of himself (a). These Testimonies Mr. Foster contradicts, and confidently afferts, that it was no otherwise a Sacrifice, than by Acceptation. How trifling therefore is it, yea how absurd to observe, as he does, that it is the express Command of God, to consider the Death of Christ, under the Notion of a Saerifice (b). What? Are we commanded by God to consider, or account the Death of his Son to be that which in Fact it was uot?—A Sacrifice it feems his Death was not; but we are required by God himself to confider it a Sacrifice: This is ridiculous trifling indeed with facred Things. Three Reafons are affigned for our accounting, by Vertue of divine Authority, the Death of Christ to be what it was not. 1. That it might be

<sup>(\*)</sup> Page 401. (\*) 1 Cor. v. 7. (\*) Heb. ix. 26. (\*) Page 402. (2) Eph. v. 2.

a standing Memorial of God's being propitious. and inclined to pardon the Sins of Men-a Memorial co-inciding with the almost universal Sentiment and Practice of the World (among whom Sacrifices were esteemed as an essential Part of Religion) and likely, upon that Account to have a more certain and powerful Influence (c). Answ. What Fitness was there in the Death of Christ to be such a standing Memorial? None at all according to our Author's Opinion; it became so by a mere arbitrary Act of God, who would have Men confider it under the Notion of a Sacrifice, tho' it was not a Sacrifice. Again, the Death of Christ procured the Pardon of Sin in a Way honourable to the Law and Justice of God; and in him we have Redemption thro' his Blood the Forgiveness of Sins. Hence we read of his purging our Sins, and putting away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself. And, therefore, it is finking the Death of our glorious Lord, to serve a very low Purpose, viz. to be a Memorial only of an Inclination in God to pardon Sin. Besides, would God meet with the Superstition and Prejudices of the World, who almost universally thought Sacrifices necessary to appeale the offended Deity? Or in Compliance to this foolish Prejudice of Mankind, would he have the Death of his Son confidered as a Sacrifice, tho' it was not so in Fact? Abominable, shocking and horrid is this! Was it becoming the Wisdom of God, so far to countenance the superstitious Fears and abfurd

<sup>(°)</sup> Page 402.

absurd Prejudices of foolish Men, (so Mr. Foster speaks) who thought that Sin could not be pardoned without Atonement? Was not this the ready Way to encourage them to retain that Prejudice to the Dishonour of the merciful Nature of God, who is disposed and determined, (as our Author thinks) to remit Sin without any Satisfaction made to his Law or Justice? Farther, this seems to suppose, that if Men had not fallen into the abfurd Opinion, of the Necessity of Sacrifices, we should never have been commanded by God, to consider the Death of his Son, as a Sacrifice. If it is true, that for this Reason, we are required to esteem the Death of Christ what it was not in Fact; the whole Gospel is a mere Fable, and unworthy of the Regard of Men. 2. That it might be a standing Memorial of the Evil and Demerit of Sin (d). Answ. How comes it to be fuch a Memorial? Was there any Fitness in it to be such a Memorial, or to serve such an important End? No, it was merely an arbitrary Act in God, to appoint it fuch a Memorial. If Sin had been laid on Christ, if he had fuffered in the Room of Sinners, if in fuffering he had been made a Curse, an Offering for Sin; his Death in itself would have been a full Evidence of the evil Nature and dreadful Demerit of Sin, and it eternally would be a fit Memorial of the vile Nature of it, and of the Punishment it deserves. Each of these Things

is affirmed in the holy Scriptures; but neither

of them Mr. Foster thinks is true.

3. It seems to have been wisely appointed with this View likewise, viz. to supersede the Use of all future Sacrifices; which extending even to human Sacrifices, had been the most depraved and unnatural Branch of heathen Superstition (°).

Answ. The Doctrine of the Necessity of the Death of Christ, who was a Person infinitely glorious, in order to expiate Sin, and make Atonement for it, greatly exposes the Folly of Mankind, in proposing to appeale the Wrath of God by any Thing, which it was in their Power to offer to him in Sacrifice. Again, the Account given in the Gospel, that Peace is made by the Blood of Jesus, is a proper Foundation for Tranquility of Mind, and inward Satisfaction and Joy, tho' we are conscious of Guilt and great Unworthiness: And hence we clearly discern, that God as a righteous Judge requires nothing of us, in Order to Atonement for our Sins, and the Remission of them. That Christ, by one Offering bath perfected for ever them that are fanctified (f). This Scripture the Author dreadfully abuses, when he fays, and, therefore, that it, i.e. the Death of Christ, might the better produce this Effect, viz. superseding the Use of all Sacrifices; particularly, human Sacrifices, which was worthy the Care of infinite Wisdom and Goodness, we are expresly informed, that Jesus Christ hath by one Offering perfected for ever them

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Page 403.

them that are fanctified. The Sense according to Mr. Foster is this, the Death of Christ, tho' it was not in fact a Sacrifice, yet since Men, through a superstitious Dread of the divine Anger against Sin, have been persuaded of the Necessity of Sacrifices, they shall consider his Death, as a Sacrifice, that they may not hereafter imagine, that any other Sacrifice, for

Sin is expected of them.

In the last Place, he compares the Sin of Adam and its Consequences to his Posterity, with the Death of Christ, and its Effects relating to Mankind; and very wonderful are the Discoveries he makes on these Subjects. 1. He observes, That Death is a Misfortune, not a Punishment, to which the human Race became subject in Consequence of the Sin of Adam (8). Answ. Without Guilt none are fubject to Death; if any are fo, then Death is not the Wages of Sin, nor does it follow upon the Imputation of it; but in some Instances at least, it is inflicted without any Charge of Sin at all. Both which are false: The Apostle expresly afferts, that the Wages of Sin is Death (h). And he plainly supposes, that Sin is imputed to such as die, and that the Imputation of Sin is the Cause of their dying, when he thus expresses himself: Sin is not imputed where there is no Law: Nevertheless Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not finned after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression (1). Again, the Loss which

<sup>(2)</sup> Page 404. (h) Rom. vi. 23. (i) Ibid. v. 13, 14.

any innocent Person may sustain, in Consequence of another's Guilt is not of any Thing, which Innocency entitles to, because it is unjust to deprive a guiltless Man of what his Innocency gives him a proper Right to. The Children of a Traytor fuffer Loss, in Consequence of their Father's Rebellion; but not of any Thing which Innocency entitles them to; their Right to their Father's Estate follows upon his Right; the Father not preferving that Right in himself, by due Subjection and Loyalty to his Prince, he cannot convey it to his Innocency, according to the Descendants. Constitution of God in his Law, entitled Adam to Life; so long as he continued innocent, so long he was free from an Obnoxiousness to Death. And that Law which gave him the Head and Root, a Right to Life, on Condition of preferving his Innocency, could not subject his Descendants to Death, without a Concern in his Guilt. For it is abfurd to fuppose, that one and the same Law, should enfure Life to the first Man, if he did not offend his Maker, and bring all his Posterity under a Sentence of Death, confidered as innocent; and, confequently, fince all Mankind are liable to Death, as an Effect of the first Man's Sin, the human Race must be chargeable with his Transgression, in the Sense of that Constitution and Law. So that Death is not a Misfortune only, but it is a Punishment in itself, and fuch it remains to all, who are not redeem'd by Jesus Christ, 2. This Misfortune bronght

brought upon us by the Sin of Adam, is counterballanced thro' Jefus Christ-by restoring Mankind to a Possibility of obtaining eternal Life (k). Answ. Will it be allowed, that the Sin of Adam brought us into any Danger of lofing eternal Life? If this is granted, we shall have more yielded, than we expected from this Person; tho' the Manner of his speaking does suppose it, yea, that it was lost; for that cannot be faid to be restored, which is not taken away, or loft by fome Means or other. But those for whom Christ died, or acts in the Capacity of a Mediator; are not only brought into a possible State of Salvation; but they are actually, completely, and eternally faved. has put away their Sins; redeemed them from the Law's Curse; justifies their Persons; gives them a Right to Heaven; prepares them for the Enjoyment of celestial Glory; preserves them fafe in this World; and will render them confummately happy in the next. Farther, the Author, I suppose, means, that God for the Sake of Christ will justify and reward Men with eternal Life, on the Foundation of their own imperfect Obedience, which is false, and it has been before disproved. 3. Mr. Foster apprehends, that the Things advanced are a proper Explanation of Rom. v. 15, 18, 21. But he is groffly mistaken: For the Things advanced are not true; and, therefore, they cannot be a proper Explanation of that, nor of any other Part of facred Writ. Besides, the

the Death of Christ is not there treated of; not a Word relating to it is mentioned in that Place. The Apostle in that Portion of Scripture, limits his Discourse to the Disobedience of Adam, and its Effects upon us; and to the Obedience of Christ, and the happy Fruits arifing to us, from the Imputation of that Obedience, and our being justified thereby. Nothing at all is faid of his Death and Sacrifice; and, therefore, this Observation is impertinent; it neither ferves to explain that Place, nor to confirm what he wishes to establish. 4. His Death may be much more properly described as a Sacrifice, than any Offering of brute Creatures; which had no fuch Efficacy, viz. to render the obtaining of eternal Life possible to Men. Answ. According to him, the Death of Christ, in itself, hath no such Efficacy, any more than they had. All the Efficacy spoken of, and that is not much, is of the Appointment of God; or it is the Effect of his arbitrary Pleasure; which is not only false, but absurd, as it seems to me. What Actions are in their own Nature, that they will for ever remain, no Appointment can alter them: And the Actions of an intelligent Being, cannot be attended with greater Worth and Efficacy, than is proper to the Nature of the Acts of fuch a Creature, by Vertue of any Appointment or Decree whatfoever. therefore, the Death of Christ, was not a proper Sacrifice, if it had not in itself, or in its own Nature, Efficacy to take away Sin, atone

for it, and fave Sinners, no Appointment could make it a Sacrifice, nor give Efficacy to it. 'Tis one Thing to fay, that fomething is accepted in the room of another; and quite different to affirm, that the Thing so accepted, becomes and may be esteemed that very Thing which it is accepted in the Stead of. And to affert, that the Death of Christ, is to be confidered under the Notion and Character of a Sacrifice, tho' it was not fuch, because God accepts it in the Room of a Sacrifice, is advancing a direct Absurdity. And the Death of Christ cannot properly be called a Sacrifice, or an Offering for Sin, without an Imputation of Sin to him, unless he bore the Curse it subjects us to, and underwent the Penalty that Sin demerits; all which Mr. Foster denies: And, therefore, tho' he proceeds to fay, that the Phrases of our being redeemed by his Blood, and reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, must appear to have a clear and very emphatical Meaning; they can have no fuch Meaning, that is agreeable to the Idea of Redemption, and Reconciliation, by the Offering of Sacrifice. It is mere trifling, to speak of the Death of Christ under facrifical Terms; and explain away the Idea of a Sacrifice in Relation to his Death. How can it be a Sacrifice for Sin, without Atonement; without Reconciliation, and the Security of those Persons from Wrath and Punishment, on whose Account he became a Sin-offering? It is as rational to confider and esteem our Saviour a King, without his exercifing

exercifing any regal Power and Authority, as it is to confider him a Sacrifice in his Death, without his being made Sin and a Curfe. I have confidered what Mr. Foster objects to our Opinions; and what he offers in the Explication and Defence of his own, on various Subjects: And I hope, that our Sentiments are fully cleared of those Absurdities he imputes to them; and that the pernicious and dangerous Principles he advances, are sufficiently exposed and resuted. But that I leave with the Reader to determine, as he shall see Reason upon due Examination.



A

# HURST HEREN STORY

A

# DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

A CALVINIST, a SOCINIAN, an Arminian, a Baxterian, and a Deist.

IVE Gentlemen of some Learning, and Ingenuity, happened to meet together, at a Friend's House in the Country; which was very agreeably fituated; it was erected on a fine Soil, in a good Air, and on rifing Ground; within View of it were lofty Hills; and between them were extraordinary fruitful Valleys; fo that the Prospect it afforded was charming and delightful. And what rendered it still more agreeable was, it had a large Garden, laid out in the most elegant Manner; which abounded with Fruit-trees of the best Sorts, curious Plants, and a great Variety of the finest, and most fragrant Flowers. In it were shady Walks, that led up to a pleafant

fant Summer-House, built on an Eminence; by which Advantage, you at once faw the Beauties of Nature, that displayed themselves all around, and the Skill of the Gardener in fitly placing the whole of his beauteous Charge. And before it, was a Canal replenished with Water, clear as Chrystal. The Gentlemen finding themselves thus surrounded with Delights, each congratulated their Friend, who enjoyed the Pleasures of Life, in a Degree fufficient to fatisfy any Mind, which hath Limits to its Ambition. He on his Part, entertained them in a Manner fuitable to his Circumstances, Generofity, and Politeness. As his Fortune was large, his Disposition was generous, and his Deportment genteel and po-They frequently retired to the Summer-House, not only for the Sake of that Pleasure, which arose from the many entertaining Objects they there beheld, but also for free and uninterrupted Conversation.

Their Discourse often turned upon Subjects useful and instructive. Sometimes they conversed about the heavenly Bodies. And with Rapture they observed the large Number of the fixed Stars, and the different Magnitudes, vast Distances, and double Force of the primary and secondary Planets; by Vertue of which, they always move in their proper Spheres, without receding too far from their Centre. They discoursed of this terrestrial Globe; and with Admiration took Notice of its fit Distance from the Sun, by whose Rays it is enlightened,

U 3 rendered

rendered fruitful, and fuitable to be inhabited by the Variety of Creatures, wherewith it is plentifully furnished; that in particular, it is very commodious for the Residence of Man, who is far the most noble of all its Inhabitants.——That it is not placed fo near the Sun, that prodigious and amazing Ball of Fire, as to be scorched by its Heat; nor so distant from it, as to be frozen by extreme Cold, thro' the Want of its warming Rays.—That by its diurnal Motion, we enjoy the great Advantage of Day and Night, the former for Labour, and the latter for Sleep; in order to refresh and recruit our animal Spirits, which we fpend by Exercise in the Day .-That by the annual Motion of the Earth, whereon we dwell, we have the great Benefit of the different Seasons of the Year, viz. Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter: With a Pleasure not to be expressed, they obferv'd its different Countries, divided from another by the Seas, and by great Mountains and Ridges of Hills,—the vast Variety of Commodities, which the feveral Parts of the World produce, and the Conveniency of the Sea for Navigation, whereby the Inhabitants of very distant Places, have Opportunity of maintaining Correspondence, carrying on Trade, and furnishing one another with the Curiofities each Country affords, and that with Eafe, which it can hardly be thought could be done in any other Way. They fearched into the Bowels of the Earth, and found an immense

# a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 295

immense Treasure in it; Gold, Silver, Tin, Lead and Iron, besides precious Stones in Abundance. They considered the great Variety of Animals in the Sea, and on the Land, which are intended for the Food, Service, and Pleasure of Man.—They took a View with Wonder of its towering Mountains, pleasant Dales, beneficial Rivers, purling Streams, and useful Springs, that rise and constantly flow, which are very ornamental, and exceedingly advantageous. And then with Astonishment they observed, that this Globe, filled with Wonders as it is, was designed for the Habitation of Man, and that all its Delights were intended for his Entertainment, and its Treasures for his Use.

This led them to discourse of human Nature, and to enquire what Man is, that he should be the Object of so munificent a Care of the Almighty, and infinitely wife Author of all Things. They first entered into a Difcourse of the human Body; and were fruck with Amazement, at the Confideration of the Wisdom and Power, which conspicuously appear in the Formation of it. That curious Machine raifed their Wonder, and filled them with Pleasure; which consists of Solids and Fluids, of various Members, that are mutually fubservient, and each necessary to the Good of the whole Frame. But they did not stop here; for they proceeded to converse of the human Soul, or thinking Power of Man; which renders him capable of discerning the U 4 divine divine Art, that shines so brightly in all the Works of God. And upon a nice Examination of the Properties of Matter, viz. its Solidity, Divisibility, &c. they plainly saw that Thought and Consciousness must necessarily be at a great Remove from Matter, let it be modified in what Manner foever: And, therefore, they concluded upon the Soul of Man being immaterial; and, confequently, immortal, or not subject to Corruption and Death, as his Body is, either from inward Disorder, or outward Violence.

Hence, the Gentlemen took Occasion to talk on religious Subjects: Of Man's Obeligation to love, adore, and obey his Maker; of his Happiness, which confists in a Conformity to the Law, and in the Fruition of God, who is the Origin of all Bleffedness. Their Sentiments of religious Principles were very different; which they quickly discovered. One was a Calvinist; one a Socinian; one an Arminian; one a Baxterian; and the other was a Deist. They agreed to enter into a free and friendly Debate on such Subjects, as they had different Apprehensions about; and to allow each other, full Liberty to raise his Objections, to what might be advanced: only observing the Rules of Decency, which fometimes are too much neglected in Controversies.

I shall give an Account of what each Gentleman faid, in Favour of his own Opinions, and in Answer to those Objections, which in the Conversation were urged against them, by the others.

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 297 others. The Reader is desired to observe, that C. stands for the Calvinist; S. for the Socinian; A. for the Arminian; B. for the

Baxterian; and D. for the Deift.

The Deist denying Revelation, the others thought it would be proper to endeavour to convince him of the Truth of that, before the Debate began; because he could not otherwife bear a Part in, nor receive any Advantage from the Conversation, which was intended for the Benefit of each; and in this good Work, the four were inclined to unite. D. perceiving the Difficulty that attended on his Part, and their Disposition to remove it, thanked them for that good Will they bore to him; but informed them, that they were mistaken, if they thought, that they could convince him of the Truth of Revelation, by any external Evidences, they had to urge in its Favour; because some absurd Principles, which are embraced by fome Christians, and as he understood by one in Company, viz. C. he was perfuaded, fo far at least, as he was acquainted with them, that they really are contained in the Bible; and that because they appeared abfurd to him, he rejected the Scripture; thinking, that no external Evidence ought fo far to weigh with him, as to work him up to an Opinion of the facred Authority of a Book, which abounded with direct and manifest Absurdities. Upon this frank Declaration, S. A. and B. united with D. in defiring C. to declare his Sentiments, which they

they must censure as absurd, they freely own'd, as well as D. 'till they should see, whether he was able to clear them of that Absurdity, which they apprehended did attend them. C. readily complied to open the Conversation, by declaring his Opinions; and he did so, with that Modesty which became himself, and with that Solemnity and Seriousness, which the Sublimity, the Depth, and the Importance of

the Things he mentioned, called for.

C. expressed himself thus, in delivering his Sentiments. Gentlemen, I have been much delighted with the Discoveries we have made of the infinite Wisdom, Power, and Goodness of God, in his Works. Since it evidently appears, that there is no Disorder or Defect in the natural, it cannot be reasonably thought, that there was originally any Diforder in the moral World. All intelligent Beings must have been formed perfect and absolutely free from any Defect, by the great God. therefore, human Nature is now attended with the least Blemish in its intellectual Faculties; Man was once entirely clear of that moral Disorder; and Reason dictates, that he brought it upon himself, by violating the Law of God. For until an understanding Being errs from his Duty, he cannot be the Subject of vicious Habits: Corrupt Principles only can follow upon the Commission of Sin. And, consequently, if it is allowed, that Men univerfally are imperfect, human Nature is not now fuch, as it was created of God, and Man must have

#### a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 299

have finned against his Maker. Farther, Sin certainly subjects the intelligent Creature to Death and Misery. God might, if he pleased, Justice directs to it, punish all his offending Creatures; he is not under the least Obligation to provide for the Recovery and Happiness of those, who have destroyed themselves by a finful Behaviour; and therefore, he may either fave them in a Way becoming his own Perfections, or punish them according to their Defert, as he shall see fit to determine of his free and fovereign Will. If God is pleafed to fave fome, and fuffer others to perish; as those, whom he faves, had no Claim upon him to shew them Favour; so those, whom he punishes, have no Cause of just Complaint against him, for the Penalty he inflicts upon them. My Opinion is, that God eternally bore good Will and Favour to some of the human Race; and that as the mere Effect of his unmerited Love, he chose them to Salvation, and in Wisdom resolved to execute this gracious Decree in a Way becoming all his Perfections. To this End he conflituted Christ their Mediator, and Head, he became their Surety and engaged to do, and fuffer for them whatever Law and Justice demanded. Pursuant to this his voluntary Engagement, he took their Nature into Union with himfelf, became subject to the Law, obeyed it for them, and suffered its Curse, and sustained the whole Punishment due, on Account of their Sins, whereby he redeemed them from Condemnation

demnation and Death, justifies their Persons. and gives them a Right to eternal Life. this Foundation, the holy Spirit regenerates, fanctifies, comforts, and preferves them fafe in this World of Sin, Temptations, and Snares: So that their final Happiness is certain and infallible. Others are left to fink under that Weight of Guilt, which they are justly chargeable with, and that heavy Load of divine Vengeance thereby demerited. Christ was not appointed a Saviour to them. These are my Sentiments, wherein I can discover no Absurdity; and am perfuaded, that neither of you will ever be able to prove, that there is the least Absurdity in them. Permit me, Gentlemen, to mention some few of those numerous Texts, by which these Set of Thoughts are, as I apprehend, fully supported.

I have faid, that human Nature, in its original State, was perfect and free from any Defect or Disorder; this is doubtless true; for God made Man upright (a).—That the present Disorder of our intellectual Powers, or the Depravity of our Minds, is the Consequence of Sin; if the former is true, this must necessarily be so.—That Sin subjects us to Death and Misery, according to the righteous Constitution of God in his Law: This, I think, is clearly and abundantly proved, by many express divine Testimonies to that Purpose. The Wages of Sin is Death (b). By one Man Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin (c).

<sup>(1)</sup> Eccles. vii. 29. (b) Rom. vi. 23. (c) Ibid. v. 12.

#### a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 301

By the Offence of one many be dead (4). Curfed is every one, that continueth not in all Things, written in the Book of the Law to do them (°). God is not unrighteous, that taketh Vengeance (1). Hence, I conclude, that fince all Mankind are Sinners, it would be just in God, to recompense Tribulation to every Individual of the human Race; and therefore, no Injury is done to those, who are punished for Sin, if effectual Provision is really made for the Salvation of fome. That fuch Provision is made for a certain Number of finful Men, feems to me most evident from these Scriptures. According as he hath chosen us in him, before the Foundation of the World, that we might be holy, and without Blame before him in Love. Having predestinated us to the Adoption of Children, by Jefus Christ to himself, that we should be to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace, wherein, he bath made us accepted in the beloved (8). We are bound to give Thanks unto God always for you, Brethren, beloved of the Lord; because God bath from the Beginning, chosen you to Salvation, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth (1). In whom we have Redemption thro' his Blood, even the Forgiveness of Sins, according to the Riches of his Grace (1). Having made Peace by the Blood of his Cross ( ). Christ hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law,

(d) Rom. v. 15,

(f) Rom. iii. 5.

(h) Col. i. 20.

( ) Gal. iii. 10.

(g) Eph. i. 4, 5, 6.

(1) Eph. i. 7.

<sup>(</sup>h) 2 Theff. ii. 13.

Law, being made a Curse for us (1). Being now justified by his Blood, we shall be saved from Wrath thro' him ("). By the Obedience of one, Shall many be made righteous (1). Thy People. shall be willing in the Day of thy Power (°). But God, who is rich in Mercy, for the great Love, wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in Trespasses and Sins, quickned us together with Christ. By Grace are ye faved, thro' Faith; that not of yourselves, it is the Gift of God; not of Works, lest any Man Should boast. And ye are the Workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which he hath before ordained, or before prepared, that we should walk in them ( ). Who bath faved us, and called us with an holy Calling, not according to our Works; but according to his own Purpoje and Grace given us in Christ before the World began (4). My Sheep hear my Voice, I know them, they follow me, I give to them eternal Life, they shall never perish, none shall pluck them out of my Hand. My Father which gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's Hand (1). And the very God of Peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole Spirit, Soul and Body be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it (5). Being

(1) Gal. iii. 13.

(1) Ver. 19.

(') John x. 27, 28, 29.

(a) Rom. v. 9.

(°) Pfal. cx. 3. (°) 2 Tim. i. 9.

<sup>(</sup>F) Eph. ii. 4, 5, 8, 9, 10.

<sup>(</sup>s) I Theff. v. 23, 24.

#### a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 303

Being confident of this very Thing, that he who bath begun a good Work in you, will perform it until the Day of Christ ('). Altho' my House be not fo with God, yet bath be made with me an everlasting Covenant, ordered in all Things and fure, this is all my Salvation, and all my Defire, tho' he make it not to grow ("). Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justired; and whom he justified, them he also glofified (\*). And so all Israel shall be saved (y). The Election bath obtained it, and the Rest were blinded (2). These Scriptures, Gentlemen, are a few of the many, wherein all the Branches of my Opinion, concerning the Salvation of fome, and the Destruction of others, in Confequence of Sin, are fully expressed. They are almost all of them plain Language; not metaphorical and figurative Modes of Speech. And they are fuch a Constellation of shining Evidences, to the important Truths, I have advanced, as will not be obscur'd, I persuade myself, by all the cloudy Objections, you may be disposed to raise, in order to darken that clear and strong Light, which they strike upon unprejudiced and impartial Minds, in Favour of my Sentiments. However, I am now ready to hear, what you have to object to my Opinions; and promise thoroughly to confider it; and will endeavour to give you fuch Answers,

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Phil. i. 6.

<sup>(</sup>x) Rom. viii. 30. (2) Ver. 7.

<sup>(&</sup>quot;) 2 Sam. xxiii. 5.

<sup>(7)</sup> Ibid, xi. 26.

Answers, as may defend the Truths, I embrace, and convince you of your Mistakes, as far as I am able.

S. A. B. were by no Means satisfied with the Principles C. had laid down, nor could be persuaded, that the Proofs he offered to support them, were sufficient to that Purpose; and each was forward to speak in Opposition to him.

S. who thought C. was mistaken in almost every Particular, began the Attack with a firm Resolution to grant him no Principle to argue from, without disputing it, and insisting upon clear and evident Proof of it. He began with

a Denial of original Righteousness.

I. I deny, said he, that Adam was just, before he had sinned. This unexpected Denial of original Righteousness, seemed very strange to A. and B. as well as to C. But S. had his Reasons to affign for it, which he immediately urged; they were these: I. Adam was not impeccable. 2. It cannot be proved, that he had not acted against his Conscience, before he eat of the forbidden Fruit; or that he had Opportunity of sinning, before he committed that Act. 3. It appears from that Act, that Appetite and the Senses governed Reason (in him) that before, there was not a good Agreement between that and them (a). C. answered thus. I. Righte-ousness.

(a) At vero si altero modo, probent Adamum ante illud Delictum nihil contra propriam Conscientiam secisse, id quod certe nunquam probabunt. Concludamus igitur, Adamum etiam antequam mandatum illud Dei transgredere-

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 305 oufness doth not consist in Impeccability: Or a Creature may be holy and righteous, and yet not be immutably fo. It is necessarily supposed in the Impeccability of a Creature, that he is righteous, in order of Nature, before he can be rendered unchangeably righteous. To be holy is one Thing, and to be unalterably holy is another, a farther Thing. Adam was pure in his Creation-State, tho' not above a Possibility of becoming impure. 2. That he did not act against his Conscience, before he eat of the forbidden Fruit, and that he might have so done is evident; for that Prohibition was not the whole of the Law, he stood obliged to obey; that was superadded to the eternal moral Law, which was inscribed on his Heart, or concreated with him: That Law he might have violated, tho' he had not eat of the Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. Will any fay, that if he had not loved and adored his Creator, he would not have acted against his Conscience? Surely none can fo imagine. And fince that is charged upon Adam as the Offence that fubjected him to Death, we must conclude, that that was the first Offence he committed, unless, we can be so irrational, as to conceit, that if he had but forbore to have eat of that Fruit, he might have done any other unfit Action without involving himfelf in Guilt, and Mife-

grederetur, revera justum non suisse, cum nec impeccabilis esset; nec ullam peccandi Occasionem habuisset.

Ex eo quod Adamus deliquit, appareat Appetitum ac Sensus Rationi dominatos suisse, nec bene inter hanc & illos antea convenisse. Socin. Pralett. Theolog. Cap. III.

ry. 3. With equal Truth it may be affirmed, that Reason in Man, was not pure in his first State, because he acted contrary to right Reafon in transgressing the Law, as that, in that State, his Passions were not under the Government of Reason, because he indulged his Appetite, in what his incorrupted Reason must dictate to him, it would not be fafe for him to do. 4. You, Sir, feem to apprehend, that the Will of Man in his primitive State, was inclined neither to Good nor Evil, but indifferent to both, which is abfurd. For, not to have a Disposition to Good, and an Aversion to Evil, is a moral Defect. To discern what is good, and have no Inclination to it; and to know what is Evil and not dislike it, denote a Privation of Holinefs, which can't be suppos'd to have attended Man in his original State, without a Reflection on the Holiness of his Creator. A. at first seemed to be much of the fame Opinion with C. and approved of his Reafoning, in great Part, only, he took the Liberty, to call original Righteousness supernatural and accidental (b), which C. affirmed it was not; but connatural or concreated with Adam. But upon farther Confideration, A. departed from the Sentiments of C. relating to this Point, and advanced an unaccountable Pofition: viz. That the Law of Nature did not properly

<sup>(</sup>b) Supernaturale viro & accidentale Notitia Dei Rerumque ad Salutem æternam pertinentium, & Voluntatis secundum illam Notitiam Rectitudo & Sanctitas. Armin. Disputat. priv. Thesis. 26.

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 307 properly exercise the Office of a Law with Adam, which he might obey or not obey; but it was only a natural Instinct to do what is lawful (°). How then faid C. could Man be a free Agent, in doing what was good? Or how could his Service be reasonable Service, if he was influenced and acted by Instinct? Which Questions A. was not able to resolve. With this Exception only, which appeared unintelligible to C. A. entirely took up the Opinion of S. and borrowed all his Arguments of him, and his Answers to the Arguments of C. in Favour of his Sentiments, in Relation to this Matter (d). B. differed from S. and A. and plainly declared himself to be of the Mind of C. in this particular, and rejected the Principle of S. with some Degree of warm Resentment; though he was far enough from being of the Sentiments of C. in almost all other Things, which the Reader will be informed of here-

after (°).

II. S. faid to C. Sir, when you affert, that Sin subjects Man to Death and Misery, I suppose, you mean, that corporal Death is the Consequence, or Punishment of Sin, as well as eternal Death. C. I do. S. That, I deny, and affirm, that Man was mortal before he X 2 had

<sup>(</sup>c) Lex naturæ non proprie apud Adamum Legis Officium cui Adamus obedire aut non obedire poterat. Sed Stimulus tantum fuit & Instinctus naturalis ad faciendum quod licitum erat. Limborch. Theolog. Christ. Lib. II. Cap. 24. §. 8.

<sup>(4)</sup> Curcellaei Instit. Religi. Christ. p. 109, 10. (c) Baxter. Method. Theolog. Pars 1. p. 355, 356.

had finned. My Reasons for this Thought of the Mortality of innocent Man, are these: 1. The Procreation of Children was appointed of God the Creator, before Sin; but those who are immortal do not procreate Children, Luke xx. 35, 36. 2. Man received Meats and Food. But Immortality gives no place to Meats and Food, 1 Cor. vi. 13. 3. The first Man before Sin, had a natural, and therefore, a mortal Body, 1 Cor. xv. 44, 45. 4. The first Man before he had finned, was earthly, and therefore be was mortal, 1 Cor. xv. 47. 5. Christ removed all that is the penal Effect of Sin, he removed not Mortality, and therefore, that is not the penal Effect of Sin. 6. If Man had been immortal, there would have been no need of the Tree of Life. 7. Since all the efficient Causes of our natural Mortality, existed before the first Man had sinned, no less than afterwards, it necessarily must be, that the Effect of natural Mortality should exist, no less before than afterwards. These Arguments, said S. are more than sufficient, in my Opinion, to prove the Mortality of Man, before he transgressed against God (1). C. answered his Arguments in the fame Order he mentioned them. 1. Though there will be no Procreation of Children in the Refurrection-State, that is no Proof of its being inconfistent with Immortality. Nor does the Text referred to, imply fo much. 2. Receiving of Food is not inconfiftent with Immortality, for Christ after his Refurrection, eat

<sup>(</sup>f) Socin. Pralett. Theolog. Cap. 1.

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 309 eat with his Disciples, yet he was not mortal: And the Term Belly used in 1 Cor. vi. 13. intends the Use of it, or Nutrition, which will be needless hereafter, because Man will then live another kind of Life. 3. My Answer to your third Argument is this: Natural is not opposed to immortal; but to spiritual. The Body of Man in his first State was immortal, though not spiritual. 4. The Body of Adam. though it was not in its own Nature immortal, yet it was rendered fo by supernatural Gift. The Bodies of Men after the Resurrection will confift of Matter or Earth; but they will be made immortal. 5. Christ bath destroyed Death as a Punishment for his People (8). 6. The Tree of Life was no more than a Symbol of Life on Condition of Man's Obedience. 7. No internal efficient Causes of Death existed, before Adam sinned, viz. Pain and Sickness, &c. And as to external Causes of Death, God is the Chief, and he had determined not to take away the Life of his innocent Creature, he willed his Continuance in Life on Condition of Obedience, and no other external Cause could effect his Death contrary to the divine Will. A. declared himfelf to be fo far of Opinion with S. in this Matter, that he thought Sin did not subject Man to Mortality; though it subjected him to Death (h).

(8) Maccovi. Loci Com. p. 406, 407.

 $X_3$ 

III.

(h) Curcellaei, ibid. p. 110. 111.

III. S. was highly displeased with what C. had expressed of an eternal immutable Election of some Men to everlasting Life, and of their Sanctification, and certain Salvation, in Confequence of the divine Choice of them. objected, as follows: 1. If that were true, faid he, all Religion would be torn up by the Roots, because it evidently follows, that whatever belongs to Piety is by Necessity (1). C. Though God effectually operates upon those, whom he has chosen to Salvation, and infallibly determines their Will to chuse Holiness, yet they freely chuse it. His Operations destroy not the natural Freedom of the Will, by infallibly directing it to make a wife Choice, and, therefore, there is no Force in this Objection. I farther object: 2. If this Opinion is admitted four Things must be attributed to God, which I tremble to mention : viz. Injustice, Dissimulation joined with Deception, Folly, and Pravity. C. Sir, you may well tremble when you express these borrid Things. But how will you prove, that my Opinion supposes either of them? S. I shall prove each in its Order. (1.) It is plainly most unjust to punish any Man because be bath not done those Things, which he could by no Means do. & C. It would be fo, if Man had not put it out of his Power by Sin: But fince Man by a Criminal Behaviour, has disabled himself for the right Performance of his Duty, it is not unjust. (2.) It is Dissi-mulation joined with Deception, for God has before

<sup>(1)</sup> Socin. Pralest. Theolog. Cap. 6.

before decreed, that a great, yea the greater Part of those shall not be saved who hear the Gospel, yet he offers Salvation to all in the Preaching of it. C. God doth not offer Salvation to all who hear the Gospel, it is tendered to those only, who are convinced of their Mifery, and defire Salvation by Christ; and to them it is not barely offered; but it is also powerfully applied. (3.) It is Folly, for it should seem God attempts that, which he well knows cannot be. C. This is a Mistake, for God neither endeavours, nor feems to endeavour the Salvation of those, whom he hath appointed to Wrath, for Sin. (4.) Pravity must be attributed to God, because he will be the Author of Sin. For if it is necessary, that whoever is condemned, should sin, certainly he who before be fins, bath appointed that any one shall inevitably be condemned, bath also decreed, that be Shall certainly sin (k). C. God decreed to condemn no Man but for Sin, or without the Confideration of Sin. And though Sin certainly follows upon God's Decree to permit it, his Decree to permit it gives not Being to it, and, therefore, he is not the Cause of it. A. declared his Approbation of the Objections of S. and made them his own. The first he enlarged upon more than S. had done, and urged it in a somewhat different Manner, viz. thus: The Doctrine of absolute Predestination, tends to promote carnal Security in those who believe, that they are elected; but in others who believe X 4 that

<sup>(</sup>k) Socin. ibid.

that they are of the Number of the Reprobate, Despair; which two Things are the Pests of all Religion. For whereas Predestination is the Decree of God concerning the Salvation or Damnation of all Men, it must needs be, that all and every Man are included in the Number of the Elect, or Reprobate: And fince the Decree of Predestination is so immutable, that an elect Person can by no Sin fall from the Grace of God, nor a reprobate Man, obtain Salvation, though he should do all the Works of the Saints: It must necessarily be according to the Genius and Nature of this Doctrine, that Security will arise in him who believes he is elected; but in him who believes he is reprobated, Despair (1). C. Sir, I hope you are governed by better Principles, than this Way of arguing suggests, tho' you are pleased to reason after this fort. Shall a Man have no Concern for the Glory of God, because he is persuaded, that in infinite Goodness, he has rendered his Salvation and Happiness secure? Oh! vile Ingratitude: The worst of Impiety! Again, the Doctrine of Predestination is not of a discouraging Nature to any, who are feriously concerned about their future Welfare and Salvation, upon a Conviction of their Sins, Sinfulness, and Misery; it is fo far from that, that it is a folid Foundation of Hope, Comfort, and Joy to such: For it fecures Grace and Glory to them. Farther, if any Person can allow himself in Sin upon an Apprehension, that he is the Object of electing

<sup>(1)</sup> Limborch. Theolog. Chrift. Lib. IV. Cap. 2.

Love, it is an Evidence, that he knows nothing of the Power of divine Grace, that he is a most ungrateful Wretch, and that he has no Ground at all to conclude upon an Interest in the Grace of Election and the glorious Benefits, from thence arifing. I add, if a Man. can content himself to continue in the Practice of Evil, because he fears that he is reprobated, or not chosen of God to eternal Salvation, that Man has no Reason to think, that he is one Degree better than the Devil is. For what is it, that his Conduct expresses, but this devilish Language: Since I am to perish for my Sins, I will go on to fin: What care I for the Honour of God? Or why should I fear to offend him? I will fin and let him punish me for it, as far as he can, and I shall be able to endure: Since I am not to be happy, it is the least of my Concern, how miserable, I shall be under the Vengance of the Almighty. Oh! horrid Impiety. Oh! stupid Folly. Satan, himself don't transgress upon a worse Principle than this is. And, therefore, I wonder, Sir, that you are not ashamed to reason after this manner.

Predestination or Election, is to Holiness, in order to suture Happiness, 2 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Tim. i. 9. Rom. viii. 19. And, therefore, those who love not God, who hate not Sin, and who do not desire to forsake it, have no Foundation to believe, that they are the Objects of that gracious Decree. And such is the Sense good Men have of the Malignity of

Sin, and of the intrinsic Excellence of Holiness, that they are very desirous to avoid the former and practife the latter, even tho' Salvation is not to be fecured by it. The Man who is not, has no folid Ground to hope for Heaven, whether this Doctrine is true or false. Let such a Man expect his Portion in Hell with Devils, upon whose impious Principles, he now dares to offend against God. He would not be in Heaven if he might, I am bold to fay it. For he hath no Dislike to Sin, as Sin, nor Love to Holiness. 'Tis a mere Dream to imagine he hath. How therefore, can Heaven be a delightful Place to him, where nothing enters that defiles? Again; is it not Madness for a Person to dare to throw himfelf from a Precipice, because he knows, that he shall not break his Neck; but is sensible, that he will break his Bones by so acting, and bring fuch Pain upon himself, as it will be very difficult to endure with any Degree of Patience? You know, Sir, that David got broken Bones by Sin, tho' he did not bring eternal Destruction upon himself. A Man in his Wits would not venture upon that, which he is affured would cause him the acutest Pain, tho' it might not endanger his Life.

D. Who had kept Silence 'till this Time, now spoke, and said to S. and A. Gentlemen, I have been of Opinion with you, that the Principles of C. are abfurd and irrational; but I begin to think otherwise, and that he will be able to clear them of that Abfurdity, which you and others have led me to impute to them. What he has observed of the evil Nature of Vice, and of the intrinsic Excellence of Virtue, brings to Mind what some Philosophers have expressed, viz. That Vice ought to be forsaken, because of its evil Nature; and that Virtue's native Beauty, is sufficient to attract and charm the Mind. They feem to me to have reasoned on this Head in a far better Manner, than you and some other nominal Christians do, in opposing the Sentiments of C. tho' they had not the Advantage of Revelation, which you have. Upon this S. A. and B. declared to D. that it would be greatly pleafing to them, to find him thoroughly convinced of the Truth of Christianity; but cautioned him against being too forward of inclining to the Principles of C. which were pressed with many Difficulties not yet mentioned; he gave them Thanks for their very respectful Concern for his Welfare, and their Advice, which he promised to take. C. Desired him so to do, and faid he would not have him or any other Man become his Profelyte, but upon a deliberate Enquiry, and a rational Conviction of the Truth of his Principles.

A. Proceeded in his Discourse, and started another Objection to the Doctrine of Election, viz. That this Decree overthrows the Merit of Christ. For said he, if there is such a Decree, Christ did not merit Grace and Reconciliation, but Salvation (m). C. answered thus. 1. You,

Sir,

<sup>(</sup>m) Limborch. Ibid.

Sir, do not, I think, allow that Christ procured the Love of God to Men, or a Will in him to fave them, but maintain, that because God decreed to fave them, therefore he fent his Son into the World to die for them: Do you not? A. I do. C. 2. Then by Grace, I suppose, must be intended, not the Favour of God, but Benefits communicated to Men, which are Effects thereof. 3. These Christ by his Obedience and Death merited for all those, on whose Account, he obeyed and died. But this is a Point which will come under our Confideration hereafter; will it not? A. Yes. C. Then we will not enter upon that now. 4. I wish, that you in Reality maintained the Doctrine of Reconciliation by the Death of Christ. I think you do not. This we shall have Occasion to discourse of by and by, shall we not? A. We shall. C. Then we will not debate that Matter at present. 5. The Decree of Election, and the Merit of Christ, are perfeetly confistent: For God did not purpose to fave the Elect, without a Satisfaction given to his Law and Justice; and therefore, in this Decree, he appointed Christ to obey and suffer in order to that important End.

B. My Opinion is, that in Election, God purposed to give a larger Measure of Grace, to those who are the Objects of his Choice, than to others, whereby their Sanctification is certainly effected, and their Salvation secured .- That he determined to give that Grace to others, which renders their Salvation possible, the not

certain (n). G. Sir, your Opinion is either to be supported, or not, as your Sentiments concerning the Nature of the divine Operations on the Souls of Men, may be proved, or not proved. And, therefore, tho' I have many Objections against it, and such, as I think, are very strong; yet it does not seem necessary to enter into a Debate with you at present about

it. B. It is not needful now.

C. A. B. and D. asked S. if he had any Thing farther to offer on this Head of the divine Decrees relating to the Salvation of Men. He told them that he had, if they were disposed to hear it. They said, that they were ready to attend to what he had more to fay. S. What I shall now advance, will not only affect the Sentiments of C; but yours also, A. and B; and, therefore, I expect Opposition from each of you, and it may be, that D. himself, may be my Opponent in this Matter. What peculiar Thought can that be, which you suspect will be disagreeable to us all, faid they to him? S. I confess it is novel; but that is no just Objection to it; it is this: God doth not foreknow the free Actions of Men. He plainly faw Confusion and Resentment in their Countenances, upon his afferting this; and therefore, he prepared himself for the Attack, he expected from them. They all cenfured this Principle as abfurd, and feemed confident, that he could not support it. But S. doubted not of the Strength of his Arguments, and therefore, he mentioned them with

an Air of Affurance, which indeed was common with him.

1. My first Argument is this: The Fore-Knowledge of God, relating to the Actions of Men destroys human Liberty, and therefore it can't be true. C. Tho' whatever is foreknown, will certainly be, yet the Freedom of the Agent in acting of that Thing is not deftroyed: For the Will of the Agent acts voluntarily therein. The Certainty and Contingency of Actions are not inconfistent, as Respect is had to God and to Man, relating to those Actions.—What is contingent to Man is not fo to God. S. 2. I deny that contingent Things are future; and they not being future, they cannot be foreknown of God. C. Contingent Things are future; which I prove thus: Whatever is at any Time, it was eternally true, that it would be; and that it would be at the very Point of Time, and in the very Manner it is: Now if it was eternally true, that whatever is, would be; then it was future, or a Thing that certainly would be, at the Time, and in the Manner it is; and therefore, to deny God's Fore-Knowledge of the free Actions of Men, necessarily supposes him to be unacquainted with innumerable Branches of Truth, which is an abfurd Suppofition. For if he knows not the whole Compass of Truth, his Knowledge is limited and not infinite.

S. 3. Future Contingencies before they are, neither are future, nor are they not future.

C. It can't be true, that this Thing will be, and that it will not be; and therefore, it must always have been true, that that Thing would be, or that it would not be. If the Thing never is; it was eternally true, that it would not be; and if it is at all; it was everlastingly true, that it would be; and by Consequence, nothing can be contingent or uncertain whether it will be, or will not be, to God, who is acquainted with whatever is true; and therefore, tho' with Respect to Men, some Things are contingent, and not future; they are not fo to the divine Being. The Doctrine of divine Prescience, receives undeniable Proof from many Predictions of future Events, relating to the free Actions of Men, of an evil, and of a good Sort. S. God knows whatever is future, or certainly will be. C. If you affert, that those Actions of Men, of a bad, and of a good Nature, which have been foretold, were certain; you must say according to the Principle you advance and argue upon, that the Authors of those Actions, were involuntary in them, and that therefore they were not criminal, nor virtuous Actions, which is abfurd. S. God fees what is future, as it is conceived in the Hearts of Men. C. 1. Many Predictions are delivered in the Scripture, of what Men would do, Centuries before they were born; what you have now faid, therefore, cannot be applied to those Instances. 2. Suppose a Man wills to do a Thing now, he either is free, or he is not free to continue to will it; if he is

not free to continue to will it, then he is under a Necessity in continuing to will it; if he is free to continue, or not continue to will it, then his continuing to will it, is contingent and not future; and therefore, according to your Opinion, it cannnot be foreknown, whether a Man will continue, or not continue to will any one particular Thing. And, confequently, God, himself, cannot tell what a Man will do in any Instance, wherein his Will acts freely, not to fay one Year, or one Month; but one Day before he doth it. S. There are four Rules by which we may judge of divine Predictions. 1. If the Testimony speaks of good Works, certainly foreseen; doubtless God himfelf decreed them. C. If those good Works certainly and infallibly follow upon the divine Decree, they are involuntary; according to your Opinion; and, confequently, not virtuous. S. 2. If it speaks either of good or of evil Works, it may be, that the Prediction is of Things very probable only; and for that Reason not certain, nor of that Fore-Knowledge, where-of we speak. C. That is, you mean it is a Conjecture only. How can it comport with infinite Wisdom, to speak of Things as future, which are probable only, and may not be? If they are not, will not the Non-accomplishment of those Predictions, cause Men to scruple the divine Authority of the Scriptures? or to impute Folly to God, as being disposed to raise in the Minds of his Creatures, an Opinion of his Fore-Knowledge, upon uncertain Grounds:

Grounds, and by fuch Instances, as he may be and is mistaken in? S. 3. It may be rather a Warning to avoid Evil, or to do Good. C. The Prediction of an evil Action, may be confidered as a Caution against it; but that is not any Objection to the Certainty of that Act being to be done; nor to God's foreknowing that it will be done. S. 4. If it is a certain Prediction of an evil Work, the Work itself was decreed of God, but not the Malice of the Heart (°). C. 1. Then that Work is not criminal; because, according to your Opinion, it is involuntary. 2. The Distinction between the Act, and the Malice of the Heart, I did not expect to hear from you, Sir. If God cannot foreknow voluntary Actions, then it will follow; either that Christ was not voluntary in his Obedience, or that God did not foreknow, that he would obey his Will. S. Christ's Obedience was necessary, and not free (). C. This is certainly false; for, 1. Our Saviour most freely obeyed the Will of the Father in all Things; yea he took Delight in doing and fuffering his Will. 2. Involuntary Obedience is nothing worth, because there is no Approbation of the Thing done, in the Mind of him that doth it, and he would not do it, if he could avoid it; and, therefore, Disobedience attends doing that Thing: Christ most certainly approved of what he did in Obedience to the Father's Will; if he had not, the Father could not have accepted his Obedience.

<sup>(°)</sup> Socin. Prælett. Theolog. cap. 10. (P) Ibid. cap. 14.

If our Saviour had submitted to the Pleasure of God, as a Man submits to the Will of a Tyrant, whose Commands he has not Power to refift, his Submiffion could never have been pleafing to him. 3. Hence it appears after all, that we must either maintain, that Necessity and Liberty are confistent, tho' we cannot explain how: Or we shall be obliged to affert, Gentlemen, with S. that Christ was disobedient in the Manner of doing the Will of God, shall we not? A. B. We cannot but grant, that your Reasoning is just, and your Conclusion true. D. Who diligently attended to what was expressed by S. and C. on this Subject, faid to S. Sir, you feem to me to entertain more unworthy Notions of God, than we Infidels do; for we are perfuaded. that he knows all Truth; and as C. has well argued, whatever is at any Time, it was eternally true, that it would be; and, confequently, fince you deny divine Prescience, you must maintain, that God is not acquainted with all Truth, that he is daily improving in Knowledge and Experience, by observing the Conduct of his intelligent Creatures, which it is most irrational to think. Heathens, as you call them, have framed more worthy Conceptions of God than you do. D. also said to A. and B. Gentlemen, the Concession, which you have now made to C. I doubt not but he will improve against you by and by. And how you will be able to withstand the Force of his Reasoning upon it, against some of your

your Principles, and in Favour of his own, I cannot divine. I am almost persuaded, that his Opinions are not absurd, tho' I have here-tofore thought them so. In short, I am inclined to think, that I shall commence a Christian before this Conversation is ended. A. and B. renewed their Caution to D. not to be too hasty in forming his Judgment concerning the Principles of C. And said, that they had many Objections to his Opinion of Non-election or Reprobation, which they thought he could not answer. C. declared his Readiness to hear them; but desired, that A. would first express his Sentiments concern-

ing Election, to which he confented.

A. My Opinion is, that God decreed to fave all such, as believe in Christ, and persevere in Faith to the End of Life (9). C. Did God certainly foreknow, that any would believe in Christ, and who they are? A. Yes he did; and foreseeing that they would believe and persevere, he chose them to eternal Salvation ('). C. 1. Then Faith or Holiness is not a Fruit of Election; but it is the Cause or Reafon why this or that Man is chosen, which is a Mistake: For Men are chosen to Holiness and Sanctification, and not because God forefaw that they would be holy. With as much Truth it might be faid, that Men are chosen, because they are Subjects of Glorification, as that because they are Subjects of Holiness. The present Holiness of the Saints, which is Y 2

<sup>(4)</sup> Limborch. Theolog. Christ. Lib. IV. cap. 1. (1) Ibid.

the Beginning of everlafting Life, is as much, and as truly the Refult of God's eternal Love to, and of his free Choice of their Persons, as future Glory is, which is the Completion of Grace in their Hearts, and springs from his free Favour and gratuitous Election of them in Christ (5). 2. If this is true, Election is of Works, which it is not. 3. It cannot then be of Grace, which it most certainly is (1). 4. This supposes, that God loves all Men, and intends the fame Good to all, which is not true; for he makes not the same Discoveries to all Men, nor operates upon all, in the same Manner. 5. Then those who are elected, make themselves to differ: Or they render themselves by their own Choice, the fit Objects of God's Choice, which is false. For God works in them to will and to do of his good Pleasure ("). Faith is not of ourselves, it is the Gift of God (x). 6. Your Opinion necesfarily supposes, that Men for a Time may be pardoned and justified, that they may be the Sons of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ, and yet not be glorified, but damned for ever; which Things can't be true. 7. According to your Principle, it is impossible, that any Man can be affured of Salvation; or be confident, that the good Work begun in him, or in others, will be performed until the Day of Christ (Y). 8. Then a Man may lofe his Interest in divine

<sup>(</sup>s) 2 Theff. ii. 13.

<sup>(</sup>u) Phil. ii. 13.

<sup>(</sup>v) Phil. i. 6.

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Rom. xi. 6.

<sup>(</sup>x) Eph. ii. 8.

vine Favour, or be separated from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus (\*); which I hope will never prove true. 9. A Person may then be in Union with Christ, and be rent from him, be pluckt out of his Hand, and out of his Father's Hand (\*). But neither of these can be, if our Saviour means, as he says, which I am persuaded he does. For these Reasons, and many others, I could mention, I cannot think,

that your Opinion is true.

Now, Gentlemen, I will give you my Thoughts concerning Non-election, or Reprobation, if you please. S. A. B. D. do so. C. 1. I apprehend, that God willed to exercife his Justice in his Proceedures towards some Men, on the Foundation of their own Works. This divine Purpose was without the Consideration of Sin. '2. He purposed to inflict Penalty upon them; this was with, and necesfarily supposes the Consideration of Sin on their Part. The former was a fovereign Act, and had no Cause out of God: The latter was an Act of God, as a Judge; and Sin was the moving Cause of it. To will to exercise Justice towards a Creature, in Relation to his personal Acts is one Thing; and to decree to punish that Creature is another. God may will to act towards a Creature, according to Justice, on the Foundation of the Creature's personal Actions, without any Confideration either of good or evil Works done by that Creature. But he cannot decree to exercise his remunera-Y

<sup>(&</sup>quot;) Rom viii. 37, 38. () John x. 27, 28, 29.

tive Justice towards the Creature, without the Confideration of the Creature's Obedience to his Law; neither can he resolve to exercise his punitive Justice towards the Creature, without the Confideration of the Creature's Disobedience to his Law. The Reason is evident, Justice directs not to reward without Obedience, nor to punish without Sin. As God may will to display his Goodness, in rendering finful Men happy, without all Confideration of Holiness in them, without any Contradiction to his infinite Purity: So he may purpose, to display his Justice upon Men, without the Confideration of Sin in them, without the least Contradiction to his infinite Goodness. But as his Decree to render finful Men happy, without the Confideration of Holiness in them, does not suppose, that they may be faved without Holiness: So his Intention to exercise his Justice towards some, without the Confideration of Sin, does not suppose, that they will be punished without Defert, or that he decreed to punish them without Defert. 2. As God damns no Man but for Sin, so be decreed to damn no Man but for Sin; and therefore, in that Decree, Sin is constituted the Cause of Damnation; yet it is not the Cause of God's Will to damn Men, but his Purpose to display his Justice towards them, is the Cause thereof; the not without the Confideration of Sin (b). 4. Sin certainly follows upon Reprobation, yet Reprobation is not the Cause of Sin. (1.) Sin

<sup>(</sup>b) Twis against Mason, pag. 86, 87.

is foreknown to God. (2.) It is foreknown to him, either upon his Willing it to be, or before he wills the Being of it. If before he wills it to be, then he wills it to be, because he foresees it will be, which is abfurd; and therefore, his Will of the Being of Sin, is prior to his Fore-knowledge, that it will be. (3.) The Being of Sin follows upon God's Will to permit it. 'Tis not what he effects, but what he permits, and, therefore, though its Being is certain, yet Men act it freely and without any Compulsion. A. This throws the whole Blame of Sin on God. C. It by no Means does. For, 1. God's Decree of the Being of Sin, gives not Being to it, and therefore, God cannot justly be confidered, as the Author of it. 2. The divine Decree to permit Man to fin, has no Influence upon his Will in finning. He fins. without any Excitation from God to the Evil he commits, and, confequently, the Fault is wholly his and not God's. 3. It is not contrary to the Righteoufness of God, to will the Being of Sin, if it was, he could not will its Being; but must necessarily will, that it shall not be, and then, fince Sin is, the divine Will must have been refisted or overcome, which it is absurd to think. 4. If it is not contrary to the Justice of God to will, that Sin shall be, it cannot be contrary to it, to will to permit Man to fin. 5. Though Sin certainly follows upon God's Decree of the Permission of it, yet the Will of Man freely and not necessarily chuses Sin. 6. God's Fore-knowledge of the Being Being of Sin, supposes, that it will certainly be; for if the Being of Sin was uncertain, it could not be fore-known that it would be, and, therefore, Sir, unless, you will deny as S. has done, divine Prescience, you must allow of the Certainty of the Being of Sin, as well as I: And, when you shall explain the Certainty of the Being of Sin, in a Confiftency, with the Freedom of the Will of Man, in finning, you will do what you feem to require of me, and vindicate my Opinion from the Abfurdity of making God the Author of Sin. We must both grant, that the Certainty of the Being of Sin, is confistent with the Liberty of the Will of Man in finning. The Difference between your Opinion and mine is this, you apprehend, that Sin will certainly be, upon the Supposition of God's Fore-knowledge of its Being, prior to his Will, that it shall be, which feems abfurd to me. And I conceive, that it will certainly be, upon God's willing the Being of it, and decreeing to permit Man to Sin.

B. Here interrupted C. and A. And vehemently opposed what C. said concerning God's willing the Being of Sin, and charged this Notion with the worst of Consequences. C. said to him, Sir, I know your Leader Mr. Baxter hath used many Words on this Subject; but he hath expressed very little of Weight and deserving of Consideration. I have lately read what he offers on this Point, in his Book called Catholick Theology, and in his Methodus Theologia.

Theologia. If you please we will attend to what he delivers on this Head. B. It will be very agreeable to me, to hear what you can object to his Distinctions, upon the Subject, which, I think, fet the Matter in a very clear and easy Light. C. I have quite a different Apprehension from you, relating to what that Gentleman has wrote on this Topic. However, let us confider, what he hath faid on this difficult and weighty Subject. His Distinctions upon it which you feem to admire, are these. 1. Be sure, says he, to distinguish the Name of Sin from the Nature. 2. And remember, that no outward Act is Sin, no farther than it is voluntary. 3. Distinguish between the AEt, as it is in Agentis, and as it is in passo. 4. And between the Act and the Effect. 5. Between the Effect of a single Cause, and of divers Causes making a Compound Effect. 6. And between a forbidden Object compared with another. The Use he makes of these admirable Distinctions is this. God may will, that some one shall be the Subject on which an unlawful AEt is put forth, and not will the Act. That he may will the Effect of an unlawful AEt, and yet not will the AEt itself. For Instance, he may will, that David's Wives shall be defiled, and yet not will the Act of defiling them. He also may will, that Christ shall be Spit upon, buffeted, scourged, crowned with Thorns, and be crucified, and yet not will any of those wicked Acts (c). C. 1. Neither David could

<sup>(&#</sup>x27;) Catholic Theology. Part I. 95, &c.

could fuffer by the Pollution of his Wives, nor could Christ suffer by the sinful Acts mentioned, without some one or more Persons acting those unlawful Things. 2. The Effects and the Acts expressed, are inseparable, and therefore, if God willed the Effects he must have also willed the Acts, for if those Effects could not be without those very Acts which produced them, God could not will the Effects, without willing the Acts. As a Judge cannot will, that a Criminal shall suffer Death, in this or the other manner, without willing the Act of putting him to Death, in that or the other manner: So God could not will, that Christ should suffer Death, by being suspended on and nailed to the Crofs, without willing the Acts of suspending him on it and nailing him to it. 3. God either willed, that those wicked Acts should be done by some Agent, or without any, the latter, I imagine none will suppose, if not, then he willed some Person or Persons should do those Acts, and if he willed that any should do them, then he either willed, that those Acts should be done by some who were not concerned therein, or by those who were, the former furely none will think, and therefore, God willed not only, that fuch Acts should be done against Christ; but he alfo willed that those Acts should be done by the very Persons who were the Agents in his Crucifixion. Mr. Baxter recommending Epifcopius, (a Champion of the Arminian Party,) on those Texts, which are brought for the Support

<sup>(4)</sup> Institut. Theolog. Lib. IV. Sect. 44.

cifying him, by some Persons or other; that is, if he willed it, in a possible way, without doing it himself: If it was done at all, it must be done, by Instruments, or without: God did not will, that his Son should suffer on the Cross, without some being concerned, as Instruments, in his Crucifixion, and therefore, he willed their Act of crucifying him. 2. He decreed, that those very Persons should be the Actors of this vile Tragedy, who acted therein, and not others.

He proceeds to give Answers to several Arguments which Dr. Twis has advanced to prove his Opinion. 1. His first Argument is this, Permission is a Sign of Willingness, as well as Command, and what is permitted (and that for Good) infallibly cometh to pass. Mr. Baxter answers, it is false, that non impedire efficaciter, i. e. not to binder effectually, is a Sign that one wills the Thing. I reply: No Man can do any Act, but as he is supported by God in doing it. Again, if God wills to support a Creature in acting, he must be supposed to will the Act he does, though he approves not that Act; because if God did not will the Act, he would not will to support the Creature in the Act, without which, the Act could not be done. Farther, God either willed that his Son should suffer and die in the manner he did, by the Means of some, or without the Means of any; I can't perfuade myself to think, that you will fay, that God willed Christ should suffer and die on the Cross, without the Means of

of any, and if not, then it necessarily follows, that he willed his Sufferings and Death on the Cross by the Means of some: And if he willed this by the Means of any, he must have willed it, by the Means of those, who acted in that vile Affair, and not by the Means of any others, for that it is plainly abfurd to suppose. Consider this well, and let me ask you, whether, fince God had decreed, that Christ should die on the Crofs, he did not will, that fome one or more should be concerned in nailing him to it? If you shall fay, that God fore-faw, that the Jews would be inclined to crucify him, I would ask you, if you think, that they could have done it contrary to the Will of God? You will hardly answer in the Affirmative. B. No, I cannot do that. C. Then you must say, that though God had decreed the Crucifixion of Christ, and fore-saw, that the Jews would be disposed to crucify him, he neither willed, that they should, nor willed that they should not. It may be you will not care to affirm this, when you have thoroughly weighed it. Because it is abfurd to fay, that though God wills to fupport a Creature in acting, yet he neither wills, nor nills the Action, which the Creature does, as supported by him in that Action. Notwithstanding Mr. Baxter your Leader from fome others affirms it.

Dr. Twiss's second Reason is, God is the principal Efficient of a sinful Action: Of Absalom's, for Instance, in defiling his Father's Wives, &c. To which Mr. Baxter returns se-

veral Answers. 1. Says he, Hobbes could defire little more. This is a vile Infinuation; for the Dr. did not think, nor does his Argument suppose, that the will of Absalom was necessarily determined to the Choice he made by the Objects he beheld. 2. Says he, God did not as a principal Efficient, cause Absalom to will that Congress with his Father's Concubines, nor to act it. Neither is this supposed, what is intended is this; that God, by vertue of whose Power every Creature acts, willed to support Absalom in so acting, and therefore, it must be thought, that he willed the Act. 3. He adds, God suspends his own Operation, so as not to necessitate the Will. This is very impertinently observed. For it is not apprehended, that the Will is necessitated to make the evil Choice it does, in Sin. What is maintained is, that fince the Will acts dependently on God, he must will the Act of the Creature's Will, though he does not Cause and necessitate the Will of the Creature to act as it does.

3. The Dr's. third Argument is, God doth not give that effectual Grace, without which he fore-knoweth Sin will not be avoided; and therefore, he is willing that it be done. The Sense of this Argument, I take to be this; God does not will to prevent Sin in some Instances; and therefore, he wills Sin to be acted in those Instances. Mr. Baxter denys the Consequence: And fays, it only followeth, that be doth not absolutely and effectually nill it. To which I reply, 1. It is abfurd to suppose, that

that God partly nills, and partly not nills any Thing: His most holy Sovereign Will cannot possibly, either partly will, or partly nill. 2. If God partly nills a Thing, and yet that Thing is; then his Will, fo far as it is acted in nilling, is refifted or overcome. 3. God undoubtedly preserves the Liberty of Men, when he wills to prevent, and does prevent their finning, by the Influence of his Grace upon them; and therefore, tho' he doth not will in fuch a Way, that Men shall not sin, as is inconfistent with the Freedom of their Will, it follows not, from his not forcibly preventing their Sin, that he nills their Actions. Which Mr. Baxter feems to suppose does follow, by a Comparison he makes of the different Conduct of a King towards his Children and towards a Traitor, in Relation to eating Poi-

4. Dr. Twiss reasons thus: God willed to manifest his pardoning Mercy, and to exercise his punitive Justice; neither of which can be without the Being of Sin, and therefore, God must be supposed to will the Being of it. God willeth Malum esse, i. e. that Sin be, as the Matter of exercising his Mercy and Justice, not as his Sin, but tantum vult sieri malum alterius, i. e. only as the Sin of another. Says Mr. Baxter, I deny it with Horror, as a Reproach to God's Justice. This Gentleman, was sometimes seized with Horror, when he had nothing terrible in his View, and so he was here. After his Fit of Horror is a little

over, he begins to argue thus: The Terminus a quo is not the Materia Misericordiæ vel Justitiæ exercendæ. He means Sin is not the Matter of exercifing Mercy or Justice. I reply, a finful Creature is the Subject whereon pardoning Mercy or punitive Justice are exercifed, and Sin is the Matter about which they are exercised; if, therefore, God willed the Exercise of his pardoning Mercy on some, and the Exercise of his punitive Justice on others, he must be supposed to will the Being of Sin in both. Again, those are not delivered from Sin, who fuffer Punishment for it; and, confequently, Sin is very improperly called the Terminus a quo, in Relation to them, by Mr. Baxter.

5. Says the Dr. by the same Reason as God might not will the Being of Sin, by his Permifsion, he might not permit it. A raw unproved Assertion, fays Mr. Baxter (°). I reply, it is not so: For, 1. It is the Nature of Sin, that is contrary to the Holiness of God, and not the Being of Sin: If the Being of Sin was contrary to his Holiness, he could not permit the Being And, therefore, 2. God may will the Being of Sin by his Permission, for herein he acts nothing contrary to his own infinite Rectitude. 3. Yet we do not say, that God defires his Creatures to Sin. Defire implies an Approbation of the Thing defired. But a Will to permit the Creature to fin, implies no fuch Thing. Again, to approve of the Being of Sin

<sup>(</sup>e) Catholic Theology P. I. pag. 97, 98, &c.

Sin to certain wife Ends, is one Thing; and to approve of the Creature's committing Sin, is quite another. The former God does, the

latter he does not, nor can do.

C. faid to B. Sir, if you please to allow me the Liberty, I will mention some other Arguments to prove, that God wills the Being of Sin. B. Do if you chuse it. C. My first Argument is this: God foreknew that Sin would be; his Prescience is immutable; it cannot be so from mutable Causes, as all second Causes are; and therefore, its Immutability arises from the divine Will, that Sin shall be; and, consequently, God must have willed the Being of Sin. 2. Either God willed or nilled it, or neither. It cannot be faid, that he nilled it, because nothing is, be nilling it .- That he did not nill, neither not nill; because what he neither wills, nor not wills, that he is unconcerned about; wherefore Sin would be without the Providence of God; for the Care of God, and the Providence of God, are one and the same; as appears 1 Cor. ix. 9. Therefore, he willed (Sin); but as we fay, with a Will permitting not effecting. But you will say, this is not a sufficient Enumeration: For he may partly will, and partly nill. The Sense may be twofold, of this partly willing, and partly nilling: Either it is this; that this Action of the Will of God is mixed of a Will and no Will; of such Sort was the Act of those, who cast Jonah into the Sea, who had a Desire to fave him, but because they could not, except they perished themselves, they unwillingly cast

bim into the Sea. In this Sense, this Enumeration is most false; for God doth nothing unwillingly. Or this is the Sense of the Enumeration; that God wills not Sin for itself, but for some other End. And this Senje is most true. The Words of Perkins deserve our Notice. I do not deny, fays he, but God permits Evil, as it is in itself evil, (otherwise it would not properly be evil in Nature) but I deny, that he permits it, because it is evil. For God never permits Evil, because of itself, but because of a connected Good. This is that Beza intends against Castellio on Predestination. God never permits Sins, as they are Sins; but always prohibits and forbids them (f). After debating this Point, A proceeded in objecting to the Opinion of C. concerning Predestination. And faid, That it makes God to have destined Men to eternal Damnation, whom he considered as innocent. C. This Charge is false. For, 1. Tho' God determined to exercise his Justice towards fome Men on the Foundation of their own Works: Yet, 2. He did not appoint them to suffer Punishment, considered as innocent: To decree to exercise Justice towards some, on the Foundation of their own Works is one Thing, and to decree to inflict Penalty on them, is another. As it is one Thing for God to determine to act towards some Men, not on the Foundation of their own Works, but according to his free and unmerited Favour; and to decree to render them for ever happy in the Fruition

<sup>(\*)</sup> Maccovi. Loci. Com. pag. 207.

Fruition of himself, is another. And as God may determine to shew forth his Goodness towards fome, without the Confideration of a Meetness in them for the Enjoyment of Bliss; tho' he cannot appoint them to the Possession of eternal Life, without the Confideration of that Meetness: So he may decree to exercise his Justice towards others, without the Consideration of a Fitness in them for Destruction; tho' he cannot appoint them to Punishment, without the Confideration of that Fitness. A. This Opinion of your's necessarily makes God a Hypocrite, or infincere, in declaring, that he defires the Salvation of all, at least, who hear the Gospel. C. 1. This is not a very modest Way of expressing the Objection. 2. It is not yet proved, that God expresses a Desire of the Salvation of all who hear the Gospel. 3. If it is true, that God defires the Salvation of all who hear the Gospel; he is either able to effect their Salvation, or he is not able: If he is not, then he defires that that may be which he cannot bring about; which it is irrational to suppose. If he is able to effect it, and does not; then he must be thought to defire that to be, which tho' he can accomplish, he will not; this is as unreasonable a Supposition, as the former. A. This supposes no Weakness in God; but it would not become his Wisdom and Righteousness to do more in order to the Salvation of Men, than he actually does, because the Freedom of the human Will must be preserved. The Uncertainty therefore, of the Salvation of Men,

Men, tho' God defires it, arises not from the Nature of God, who is omnipotent, and able to do whatever he pleases, that is becoming his infinite Perfections; but from the Nature of Man, who is not to be compelled to chuse even his own Happiness. As God created Man a free Agent. and so a proper Subject of moral Government, it can't confift with Wisdom to destroy his free Agency, in his Operations on Man, even tho' it be to fave and render him happy. C. Your Reasoning here seems to me to reflect on divine Wisdom; for it supposes, that God has given Being to a Creature of fuch a Nature, that he, himself, cannot possibly render its Happiness certain, tho' he earnestly defires it, and is at the greatest Expence in order to it. How could Wisdom direct in the Formation of a Creature, whose Nature is fuch, that it necesfarily renders its certain Happiness absolutely impossible, even tho' infinite Goodness desires it, and Omnipotence acts in order to it? God then has disappointed himself of his own Wishes, by making Man of fuch a Nature, that he may be unavoidably miferable, notwithstanding he most earnestly desires his Happiness. Will not God therefore repent that he has made Man, fince he has made him of fuch a Nature, that he cannot fecure that Good to him, which it is his most ardent Wish, he should enjoy? I should think he certainly will. 2. But it is not yet proved, and I am bold to fay, it never will be, that God cannot infallibly determine the Will of Man

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 341 to the Choice of what is right and fit, without destroying his free Agency. 3. If the Salvation of no Man is possible without Regeneration, and Regeneration is the Work of God, which it certainly is: If no Man can be faved without Faith, and Faith is the Gift of God, which it undoubtedly is; then unless God regenerates Men, and gives Faith to them, their Salvation is impossible: And if there are some Men, whom God does not regenerate, to whom he does not give the Grace of Faith, the Salvation of those Men is not possible, and, confequently, God cannot will their Salvation; for it is abfurd to think, that he can will Impossibilities. 4. That the effectual Determination of the Will of a Creature to the Choice of Good is confistent with Freedom, is evident. (1). From Christ, who could not but will to obey his Father, and yet he freely willed to obey him. A. Our Saviour might have willed to disobey him, or have sinned (8). C. Then the Author of our Salvation might have become a Sinner, and stood in need of a Saviour himself. This is shocking to think, and it is more so to express the Thought. (2). If an intelligent Creature can be rendered immutably happy; then the Will of that Creature, may be effectually determined to the Choice of Good, without the Loss of its natural Freedom: If it cannot, then some time or other, Christ may will Evil, the holy Angels may will Evil, glorified Saints may will Evil; and fo Heaven may

<sup>(</sup>E) Episcopii Respons. ad Defens. Camer. cap. 12.

may become entirely empty of all its Inhabitants: And our Saviour, Angels, and the Saints who are now above, may all become the Companions of Devils, and fink down into the infernal Pit! Which who can think is poffible? And if that is not possible, then according to this Principle, there is no fuch Thing as voluntary Service perform'd in the World above; but free Agency is lost by our Saviour, by Angels, and by the Spirits of just Men made perfect. Take which of these you please, Sir. A. You seem to be very confident of the unanswerable Force of your Dilemma. But it don't affect me at all: For what I maintain is, that the Will of an intelligent Creature, that is immutably happy, is indeed invariably disposed to the Choice of what is good, but that it is freely fo difposed. Very well, none deny that: But how comes the Will to be invariably disposed to make this good and wife Choice? Is it from its own Nature? A. I cannot fay that. C. How then? A. In Consequence of the Will of God, that that Creature shall so will, and be happy for ever. C. Your Answer is just. I suppose, you do not think, that the Will of God deprives the Will of the immutably happy Creature of its Liberty, in any of its Acts. A. I do not. C. Are you able to explain how the Freedom of the Will can confift with this invariable Disposition to the Choice of Good? A. I am not able. C. Then my Reasoning stands firm, and the Force of my Dilemma, you must

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 343 must allow is unanswerable. A. How does that appear? C. Thus: If it is not from the Nature of the Will itself, that it is invariably

that appear? C. Thus: If it is not from the Nature of the Will itself, that it is invariably inclined to Good, but from the divine Will; then God may preferve the Will of a Creature from making an unwife Choice, and always effectually direct it to chuse what is right and fit, without infringing its natural Liberty. A. That I fee I must not venture to deny. C. Then, I think, you will be obliged to allow me all, that I defire you to grant in this Matter, viz. That Necessity may be without Coaction, and may confift with the natural Freedom of the Will. And, therefore, you ought not to refuse granting, that God may effectually dispose the Wills of Men on Earth, to chuse what is good, without any Prejudice to their free Agency; tho' you cannot explain, how this infallible Determination of the human Will to make a wife and happy Choice, in Consequence of the Purpose of God, that such a Choice it shall make, may confift with its natural Freedom. For, that which does not destroy the Liberty of the human Will in Heaven, cannot reasonably be thought to deftroy it on Earth. If God may prevent Men when in Heaven, from making at any Time an unwife Choice, and may caufe them always to chuse what is good, without Prejudice to their natural Liberty, either demonstrate, that he cannot effectually determine the human Will to make a wife Choice, confistent with its Liberty, fo long as Men are in this State:

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Or grant, as you ought to grant it, that God may now infallibly determine Men to chuse what is wife and fit, and they still remain free

Agents.

IV. S. A. and B. Thinking enough was spoken concerning the Doctrine of Predestination, they expressed a Desire, to enter upon the Points of our Acceptance with God, and the Pardon of our Sins: Or of our Justification and Redemption by Christ. They asked C. if by what he had faid, in delivering his Sentiments, he did not intend, that the Holiness and Obedience of Christ, is our justifying Righteousness; as imputed to us of God: And if he did not mean, that Christ by his Sufferings procured the actual Remission of our Sins, Peace, and Reconciliation with God, and a full and certain Security from that Penalty, our Sins fubject us to. C. answered to both in the Affirmative. S. A. and B. greatly disapproved of his Principles in Relation to these momentous Subjects. Each had his Objections, to the Opinions of C. though there was some Difference, in their Apprehensions, concerning these Points. They agreed upon defiring C. to mention the Reasons why he thought, that we are justified by the Holiness and Obedience of Christ, and accordingly he did. C. 1. My first Reason is, Christ was our Surety, in his Obedience to the Law Heb. vii. 22. Hence we read of his being made under the Law to redeem us from it, as a Covenant of Works. What is done by a Surety for others, is accepted for, and imputed to them.

them. Christ fulfilled the holy Law of God. as fuch, and therefore, his Obedience is imputed to them, whose Surety he was, and they are justified or accounted righteous, in Confequence of the Imputation of that Obedience to them. S. I deny that Christ was our Surety to God, a Surety indeed he was; but he was not a Surety for us to God, but a Surety for God to us, Crellius on Heb. vii. 22. A. expressed his Satisfaction in Part with what S. faid, and denied, that Christ became a Surety for us to do what the Law required of us in order to Justification. But declared, that he apprehended, Christ was not only a Surety on the Part of God to Men; but also for Men with God. yet not to perform for them what the Law demands of them, but engaged, that they should be converted, and be saved from the Wrath of God (h). C. 1. God on his Part needs no Surety. He is Truth and cannot lye, nor is attended with Weakness, he is able to fulfil his Promises. 2. Christ could not render God more certain of our Conversion, and Salvation, by his Engagement or Promise to convert us, than he was, prior in order of Nature, to that Engagement. 3. This suposes, that Christ was a Surety for God to us, rather than a Surety for us to God. For his Engagement makes us fure what will be done for us on the Part of God, and not what ought to be done by us. 2. We are made righteous by the Obedience of Christ. There is no way of being constituted righteous by the Obedience

<sup>(</sup>h) Curcell. p. 301. Limborch, p. 269.

of another, except by the Imputation of it; and therefore, I conclude, that the Righteoufness of Christ is imputed to us for Justification.

S. infifted upon it, that the Sense of those Words is, that all the Posterity of Adam, who sinned in any manner, became guilty of his Difobedience; so those, who obey as Christ did, tho' not so perfectly, shall receive the Reward as be did (1). C. answered, 1. That it is the profesfed Defign of the Apostle to treat of the Imputation of Sin, and of Adam's Sin. 2. To prove, that Mankind become subject to Death in Confequence of the Imputation of Sin, viz. of the Sin of Adam. 3. Of the Imputation of Righteousness, i. e. of Christ's Righteousness. 4. Of our Justification as an Effect of that Imputation of his Obedience, and therefore, 5. He must intend, that we are made righteous or justified by the Imputation of his Obedience to us.

3. That Righteousness by which we are justified in the Sight of God, is not by a Law, it is not by the Works of a Lazo; and it is a Righteoufness without Works. Neither of which can be faid of our own personal Righteousness. For every Law requires a personal Obedience of those who are in Subjection to it. And Obedience to a Law, confifts of Works done, that it prescribes. And such a Righteousness cannot be faid to be without Works. Our justifying Righteousness, is not of a Law, it is not of the Deeds of a Law. It is without Works,

and

<sup>(</sup>i) Crellius in Rom. v. 19.

and therefore, it cannot be our own Obedience to any Law; but it must be the Righteousness of another, viz. of Christ. S. It is not by the moral or mosaic Law nor of the Deeds of that Law, it is without perfect Works. A. and B. said the same (k). C. This is not to explain, but to contradict the Apostle. These Distinctions you have not yet proved true, nor ever will prove them so.

4. The Person justified works not, i.e. in order to Justification, he is justified without it. Which must necessarily be by the Righteousness of another. S. That is to say, he does not perfect Works, Slichtingius on Rom. iv. 5. C. Still Contradiction, and not Interpretation. Paul says the Man works not, viz. in order to Justification; you say he does work to that

End, and that his Works justify him.

5. God justifies the ungodly, who cannot be supposed to be the Subjects of Holiness, and evangelical Obedience; they must therefore be justified by the Righteousness of another. S. Not such who now are, but once were ungodly: Crellius on Rom. iv. 5. so said A. and B. C. This is but your bare say-so; you are not able to prove it, or to prove that an ungodly Man cannot be the Subject of Justification.

6. The Reward would be of Debt, if our own Obedience justified us, i. e. according to that Law, to which our Obedience is a

Confor-

<sup>(\*)</sup> Crellius in Rom. iii. 20. Limborch p. 748. Curcell. p. 935. Method. Theolog. Pars iii. 341.

Conformity. A Debt it is not, and therefore our Obedience is not our justifying Righteouf- . ness. S. It is not due in strict Justice, or according to the perfect Law of God. Crellius on Rom. iv. 4. C. And this is but your bare Affertion without Proof, that so the Apostle means.

7. Christ is made unto us Righteousness, as well as Sanctification, and therefore, that is distinct from Sanctification, or not the same with it, and if it is fomething distinct from it, that must be a Righteousness for Justification. Sanctification Christ is made to us, as he has Grace in his Keeping for us, and conveys it to us to make us holy. Since Righteoufness is another thing, he must be made that to us some other way: And that can be no other than Imputation; because Imputation and Communication are the only two ways, wherein Christ can be made any thing to us. S. Righteousness is to be understood of Absolution or the Pardon of Sin (m). C. That confounds Righteousness with Redemption, and therefore, you are mistaken, for they are not the same Thing, but distinct Benefits. A. It can't intend the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, for Wildom and Sanctification imputed, are mere Trifles (1). C. Though they are not imputed, this which is distinct from each, may be, nay it must be, for if it is communicated, it can't be a different Benefit, but is certainly included in one or both of them. A. It is a Meto. nymy

(1) Limborch. p. 745.

<sup>(11)</sup> Socin. de Servat. Pars IV. Cap. 5.

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 349 nymy of the Cause, i. e. Christ is the Cause of our obtaining Righteousness from God (°). C. The Words are an Affertion of what God makes Christ to us, and, not of what he obtains of God for us, and, consequently, it is an unnatural and forced Sense which you put upon them (p). B. If I remember well, you mentioned, that the Holiness of Christ is imputed to us. C. I did. B. what do you defign by that; the Purity of his Nature? C. I do. And I apprehend, that is one Branch of our justifying Righteousness, and take it to be designed in Rom. viii. 2. For these Reasons: It is opposed to the Depravity of our Hearts. And Christ is the Subject of it, not we ourselves. And it is of our Justification, that the Apostle there speaks, or of our Freedom from Condemnation, by Christ. This is what some, I am of Opinion, have meant, by imputed Sanctification, which I understand has given you great Offence. The Thought is just, though improperly called Sanctification, for it is a Part of our Righteousness for Justification. B. I can by no means be fatisfied with your Opinion of the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ. C. Why fo? B. For various Reasons. C. Be pleased to produce them. B. They are these. Phrase is not in Scripture. C. The Scripture afferts, that we are made righteous by the Obedience of one, i. e. Christ; unless, therefore, you are able to shew, how we can be made righteous by another's Obedience, except by

<sup>(°)</sup> Limborch. Ibid. (P) I Cor. i. 30.

the Imputation of it to us, you ought to allow, that it is imputed to us as our justifying Righteousness. You have not as yet shewed how we can otherwise be made righteous by that Obedience, and I am perfuaded, that you never will be able to do it. B. 2. To impute signifies, to repute or judge that we ourselves are the Subjects of those Habits, and the Authors of those individual Actions, which Christ himself in his own Person had and persormed. C. This is false, the Imputation of the Act of one to another does not suppose that Act to be the personal Act of him to whom it is imputed, or it is not a reputing and judging that Act to be his personal Act. B. 3. The Accident of one, cannot be the Accident of another. C. It is true, that another cannot become the Subject of that Accident, or it cannot be in him; it is only in him, whose Accident it is; but it may be reckoned, or imputed to him. You confound Imputation and Transfusion, which are absolutely distinct; the latter cannot be, the former may. B. 4. Christ and Believers are not one Person. C. That is false. For he is the Head, and they are the Members; and they constitute one mystical Person; tho' not one individual Person, which is what you deny, and no Man is so mad as to affert. As a Surety and the Principal are one Person in the Eye of the Law; fo Christ, who is our Surety, and we whose Surety he is, are one in the Eye of the divine Law; and this is the Foundation of the Imputation of his Righteoufness ness to us. B. 5. Christ's Righteousness, as to its Effects, is imputed to us, but not that Righteoufness itself (4). C. To speak of the Imputation of the Effects of Christ's Righteousness, is exceedingly improper; Imputation can have no Place in them, they are bestowed upon us, and we become the Subjects of them, by a gracious Communication of those Effects to us; but that is very far from Imputation. Thus S. A. and B. united in opposing the Opinion of C. relating to Justification by the Imputation of the Holiness and Obedience of Christ. And they all pronounced it blasphemous, and subversive of the Christian Religion. B. was not less severe in his Expressions, than S. and A.

C. Gentlemen, you are very severe in your Censures; but without all Foundation: The Necessity of Holiness, I deny not, God forbid I should; and I maintain as well as you, that evangelical Obedience, certainly springs from the spiritual Principles implanted in the Hearts of the Saints; tho' I cannot be perfuaded, that either fingly, or joyntly taken, they are the Matter and Caufe of their Justification before God. When I fay, that they are not necesfary to our Acceptance, I do not deny the Neceffity of their Being; all I deny is, that they are necessary to the End of our Justification before God. And I think myself obliged to deny this, and ever shall think so, say all of you what you please; until I shall read in the Bible.

<sup>(9)</sup> Method. Theolog. Pars III. pag. 308.

the Imputation of it to us, you ought to allow, that it is imputed to us as our justifying Righteousness. You have not as yet shewed how we can otherwise be made righteous by that Obedience, and I am perfuaded, that you never will be able to do it. B. 2. To impute signifies, to repute or judge that we ourselves are the Subjects of those Habits, and the Authors of those individual Actions, which Christ himself in his own Person had and persormed. C. This is false, the Imputation of the Act of one to another does not suppose that Act to be the personal Act of him to whom it is imputed, or it is not a reputing and judging that Act to be his personal Act. B. 3. The Accident of one, cannot be the Accident of another. C. It is true, that another cannot become the Subject of that Accident, or it cannot be in him; it is only in him, whose Accident it is; but it may be reckoned, or imputed to him. You confound Imputation and Transfusion, which are absolutely distinct; the latter cannot be, the former may. B. 4. Christ and Believers are not one Person. C. That is false. For he is the Head, and they are the Members; and they constitute one mystical Person; tho' not one individual Person, which is what you deny, and no Man is so mad as to affert. As a Surety and the Principal are one Person in the Eye of the Law; fo Christ, who is our Surety, and we whose Surety he is, are one in the Eye of the divine Law; and this is the Foundation of the Imputation of his Righteoufness ness to us. B. 5. Christ's Righteousness, as to its Effects, is imputed to us, but not that Righteoufness itself (4). C. To speak of the Imputation of the Effects of Christ's Righteousness, is exceedingly improper; Imputation can have no Place in them, they are bestowed upon us, and we become the Subjects of them, by a gracious Communication of those Effects to us; but that is very far from Imputation. Thus S. A. and B. united in opposing the Opinion of C. relating to Justification by the Imputation of the Holiness and Obedience of Christ. And they all pronounced it blasphemous, and subversive of the Christian Religion. B. was not less severe in his Expressions, than S. and A.

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<sup>(9)</sup> Method, Theolog. Pars III. pag. 308.

Bible, that Christ is not the End of the Law for Righteousness to every one that believes. D. faid to S. A. and B. Gentlemen, you have not used C. well, in my Opinion: You have drawn fuch Confequences from his Sentiments, as are far from being just and true: You have taken the Liberty to state his Opinions in a false Light, to the End that you might infer what you pleased from them, to make them seem abfurd; but he has thoroughly discovered your Fallacy, and defended his Principles, hitherto, to my Satisfaction; and, therefore, I must take the Liberty, to tell you once more, that I am very near being persuaded to become a Christian; and I certainly shall, if he should have the fame Success in answering to your future Objections, which has happily attended him in answering to those, you have yet men-S. A. B. Sir, do not conclude upon the Truth of C's Principles, for we shall be able to prove, that Faith is imputed for Righteoufnefs. We shall thoroughly unite in maintaining this, in Opposition to his Opinion of Justification by the Righteousness of Christ alone, as embraced by Faith. S. As to what concerns us, i. e. in the Business of Justification; we are not otherwise accounted righteous before God, and obtain the Remission of our Sins, than as we believe in Jesus Christ. And we ought to beware, not to affert, that this is the efficient or impulsive Cause of our Justification before God, for it is only a Cause, without which, God has decreed not to justify us. Our Obedience, i.e. of Faith,

is neither the efficient, nor the meritorious, yet a Cause (as they express it) sine qua non, of our Justification before God, and of our eternal Salvation (1). A. The Medium in us, which God requires of us, as a Condition requisite to Justification, is Faith in Jesus Christ. Our Obedience which we perform of Faith, and which is imperfect, God graciously for the Sake of Christ, wills to esteem as if perfect. Not that our Repentance or Works deserve any Thing with God; either are so perfect, that they could stand in his Judgment, if he should will strictly to examine; God forbid I should say this: But because God by another Law and Condition, will make us Partakers of Salvation, purchased by the Blood of Christ. They (Believers) will rather be accounted righteous for the Sake of the Righteousness and Obedience of Christ, which he yielded to the Father on the Cross, to expiate the Sins of the whole World; than for their own, which being strictly examined according to the Law, is unworthy of this Name, viz. Obedidience (5). C. said to B. Sir, I suppose you agree in Opinion with S. and A. concerning Faith as a proper Condition of Justification; and that it is imputed to us for Righteousness. B. I do (1). C. But do you not think, that they speak in too low and degrading Terms concerning our own personal Righteousness,

(1) Socin. Justificat. Synopsis. II. (3) Limborch Theolog. Christ. Lib. VI. cap. 4. Curcell. pag. 939, 940. Ibid. 907.

(') Baxter's Aphorisms of Justification. Thesis 23.

when they fay that is not the impulsive and meritorious Cause of our Happiness; and that if compared with the holy Law of God, it deserves not the Name of Obedience. B. Yes, I cannot but blame S. and A. for depreciating our Holiness at that Rate. And I am bold to maintain against them, as well as against all the ignorant Wretches of your Opinion, that Dignity or Merit attends our own personal Obedience ("). C. Sir, it is so frequent with you to impute Blockishness, Ignorance and Pride to me, for opposing you, that I am not by this Time in the least affected with it. You will do well to consider what Degree of Merit attends that, or what Share of Praise it entitles you to. This I am fure of, that when you call me Blockhead, Fool, or fuch like Names, you add nothing to my Understanding. But, good Sir, be pleafed to let me hear your Reasons, why you think we merit Favours at the Hand of God. B. I will affign my Reasons; but I defire first to distinguish concerning Merit. And that is either commutative; in that Sense Angels, Man in Innocency, nor Christ himself could merit. Or it is distributive; in this Sense only, I maintain, that we merit by our Obedienee. C. Can any Creature merit the Favour of God, in a different Way. B. No. I deny that altogether. Catholic Theology, Part II. pag. 79. Your Reasons, if you please, for Merit in that Sense wherein you affert it. B. They are these: 1. We are often faid to be worthy in Scripture.

<sup>(&</sup>quot;) Method. Theolog. Pars III. pag. 317.

C. azi &, worthy, intends not Defert but Meetness; bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance, that is to fay, fuitable to Repentance, and not deferving of it, Mat. iii. 6. And so it is to be taken, when Christ fays, they shall walk with me in White, for they are worthy, viz. meet to poffess, but not deserving of that Happiness. B. 2. Goodness is amiable and pleasing to God. Faith is a mean fitted to procure the Love of God, Holiness and Felicity. C. That which flows from divine Love, cannot procure it. Faith is an Effect of God's Love, and therefore, it cannot be a Cause of it. Again, that which, because it is imperfect, deserves or subjects us to Punishment, cannot entitle us to the divine Favour, and eternal Life. Such is our Faith and best Holiness: All our Righteousnesses are as filthy Rags. Do you think that we shall at last be justified, principally on Account of what Christ has done and suffered for us, or on Account of our Faith and personal Holiness? B. It is my firm Opinion, that we shall at the Day of Judgment especially be justified on Account of Faith, and our own personal Holiness. It must be said, that the Glory of Christ was first intended; and that the Righteousness or Merit, and federal Donation of Christ, are the Cause of our Justification, far more eminently than Faith; but that Faith and our federal Fidelity will especially be the determining deciding Cause at that Day (\*). C. What Papist will fay more. B. I am not ashamed to own, that Aa2

<sup>(\*)</sup> Method. Theolog. Part III. page 349.

I think, the Papists are much sounder in the Doctrine of Justification, than you and many other hot-headed Protestants are. C. I suppose you mean such as Calvin, Zanchy, Beza, Turretin, Twis, Pemble, Owen, Maccovius, &c. B. I do. C. I like my Company very well, and think myfelf highly honoured to be ranked among fuch Perfons. If these are your Blockheads, Dunces, or whatever elfe you, in your Christian and Gentleman-like Manner, shall please to call them, I am fully content to fall under your severest Censures with them,

I affure you, Sir.

Now Gentlemen, said C. if you please, I defire you will favour me with an Account why you think, that Faith is imputed to us in order to Justification. S. A. and B. we will. this; Faith is expressly said to be imputed to Abraham, for Righteousness; and Rahab is faid to be justified by Works; and therefore we cannot but conclude that Faith is, at least, the Matter of our Evangelical Righteousness, or Justification according to the Gospel. C. Faith fometimes is put for the Object. I suppose you will make no Difficulty of allowing that it is in these Words: Before Faith came, we were Sout up under the Law. And that it is to be taken in this Senfe, in the Places you refer to, many Arguments might be advanced to prove. As that Faith is a Work—its Fruits are good Works, and therefore, if we are justified by Faith, and its Effects, we are justified by Works; which we certainly are not. Farther, Faith

Faith and that Righteousness, by which we are justified, are plainly distinguished; and, confequently, Faith cannot be that Righteoufness. Moreover, that which because of its Imperfection needs Pardon, cannot justify; for it is abfurd to conceive, that those Acts, which render us guilty in the Sight of God, on Account of Defects which attend them, can render us the fit Objects of Justification. I add, the Believer acts other Things besides Faith, &c. For the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and therefore, tho' fome of his Actions are approved of God, there are many in him, which God detests; and by Consequence, his personal Actions, cannot justify him in his Sight. Many other Reasons I could mention, why Faith is not to be interpreted of the Act; but that it is to be understood of the Object, i. e. Christ, or his Righteoufness, but I shall only mention one more at this Time, which is, that that must necessarily be our justifying Righteousnefs, by which we are made righteous, and that is the Obedience of Christ, and not Faith. S. A. and B. How will you then reconcile Paul and James. C. Briefly, and without any Difficulty. Paul treats of the Matter of Justification, which Faith views, depends upon and embraces: James discourses of a dead inactive Faith, or of a bare Affent to evangelical Truths, which is not productive of good Works. That it is his Defign, to prove, that that Faith is of no Value, which is not attended with good Works, is most evident; and, therefore, A 2 3 1t

it is his Intention to prove, that a Man, who is the Subject only of a dead Faith, has no Ground to conclude upon his Justification in the Sight of God. He does not enter throughout his Discourse, upon the Matter of our Acceptance with our fupreme Judge. Whereas that is what the Apostle Paul professedly treats of. This, Gentlemen, is I think, a fair and easy Reconciliation of the two Apostles, Paul and James. But you may meet with more Reasons for what I now advance, in the Anfwer to Ruin and Recovery, published some Time fince, and in many other Writings which may perhaps be better to your liking, than that will be; confult them on this Head. S. This your Opinion of the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, is so foul and execrable; that I shall not believe, that a more pestilent Error existed among the People of God, since Men were born into the World. This S. faid upon a Supposition, that evangelical Holiness is not required of us ('). C. Sir, you mistake, Holiness is required of us, as a Meetness for Heaven, and without it no Man shall fee the Lord; but it is not required of us, as our Title to eternal Life; or as the Matter of our Acceptance with God. B. was equally severe in cenfuring the Opinion of C. He pronounced it blasphemous; but was obliged to state it in a false Light, that he might have proper Ground to support this Charge, viz. That we perfectly performed the Commands of the Law in Christ .

<sup>( )</sup> Socin. de Servat. Pars IV. cap. 7.

and, therefore, never finned, and, consequently, the Blood of Christ was shed in vain to procure our Pardon (2). C. defended himself from this Charge thus. 1. What Christ did for us, he only was the personal Actor of: His Acts were not our personal Acts. 2. But as he performed Acts of Obedience to the Law, as our Surety, that laid a proper Foundation for the Imputation of his Righteousness to us. And, therefore, 3. When it is faid, if any have fo faid, that we obeyed the Law in Christ, the Meaning is, not that we personally obeyed; but that our Surety and Representative, obeying for us, we are reckoned to have obeyed in him; the Acts were his personal Acts not ours, nor can be accounted our personal Acts. And, therefore, there is no Foundation for this dreadful Charge, nor is the Conclusion just, that Christ died in vain to obtain our Pardon. For we are personally Sinners, and so we stand condemned by the Law; to free us from that Condemnation our Saviour suffered for us; being personally Sinners, we cannot be personally righteous; hence it was necessary, that Christ should bring in an everlasting Righteousness for us, which he did; and by the Imputation of that Righteousness we are justified: and no otherwise in the Sight of God. This Charge and Conclusion suppose, that God determined to account us, fuch as Christ was in himself, and in his Obedience, without Regard in any Sense to our personal Actions, whether just or Aa4 unjust,

<sup>(1)</sup> Method. Theolog. Pars III. pag. 323.

unjust, which is most false. For, because God accounted us in ourselves unrighteous and guilty, we being really so; he appointed Christ to be our Surety and Representative, to obey and fuffer for us, he doing both; thereupon God pardons our Guilt, and justifies our Perfons. Hence it is easy to see, that God as our Lawgiver and Judge, first respects us in ourfelves personally, and so he finds us guilty and finful; and then respects in Christ, so he finds us righteous, not personally, but in him only. C. What I have now faid, I hope is sufficient to vindicate my Opinion from the Charge of Blasphemy B. has been pleased to exhibit against it; and also to prove the Necessity of the Satisfaction of Christ: Which we will now enter upon, if you think proper, Gentlemen. S. A. and B. answered that by this Time they thought that Subject demanded their Attention.

S. Vehemently opposed the whole of the Sentiments of C. in this Point, he absolutely denied that Christ made Satisfaction for Sin. And feveral Objections he raifed and urged against it. 1. That Remission and Satisfaction are inconfistent, and as opposite, as Day and Night, Light and Darkness. C. answered S. That we are thro' Christ in the same State, as a Debtor or a Delinquent is, whose Debt is forgiven and whose Crime is pardoned. (1.) Sin is not imputed: God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their Trespasses to shem. Bleffed is the Man to whom the Lord will

will not impute Sin. (2.) We are free from Condemnation: Who shall Condemn? There is no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. (3.) We are not under Obligation to suffer Punishment; but are secured from suffering any Penal Evil: Being justified by his Blood, we shall be faved from Wrath through him. More than these Particulars cannot be said of a Delinguent, whose Crime is remitted. This Freedom from a Charge of Guilt, from Condemnation, and Obligation to undergo Punishment, expresses the whole of the State of an Offender, who is pardoned. Remission of a Crime contains nothing more in it, than these three Things. And these Particulars are the principal Ideas, which the Scripture defigns to express by the Forgiveness of our Sins. 2. If our Pardon is both an Act of Mercy and an Act of Justice, a Satisfaction must be given for our Transgressions, not by ourselves, but by another for us. And it is as well an Act of Justice, as of Mercy: For God is Just, i. e. he appears to be Just as the Justifier of those who believe in Jesus: And he is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins. His Fidelity appears in fulfilling his Promifes of Pardon, and his Justice shines in the way of our Remission. In this Affair Mercy and Truth unite, Righteousness and Peace, both have Place. And, consequently, 3. A Satisfaction is given, not by ourselves, for then this would not be an Act of Mercy; but by another for us, otherwife it cannot be an Act of Justice, which it undoubtedly

undoubtedly is. 4. We had no Concern in the Appointment of this Satisfaction, nor were we personally concerned at all in giving of this Satisfaction. The Constitution of Christ, a Surety to fatisfy for us, was wholly without us, and he paid our whole Debt, without our concurring with him in the Payment of it, and therefore, our Deliverance from the Obligation, as to us, is a gratuitous Act, though at the same time, it is also an Act of Justice. The Provision which God has made for maintaining the Rights of his Justice, obscures not the Glory of his Grace; fince his Grace made that Provision. 5. Our Sponfor received his Ability, to pay our Debt, from God, who made him strong for bimself. 6. It is false, which you affert, that this Satisfaction was unnecessary, for it became God to act thus in this Bufiness, and therefore, he could not do otherwise, nor herein did he take an usetes Curcuit, as you boldly express it. 7. We do not suppose, that God made Christ ours, that it might be in our Power to deliver him up, as you fuggest we think he did; we are very far from thinking so, and are as far from faying any thing that implies it (a). S. 2. I hope it will be proved, that Christ could not satisfy for us. C. You hope then, to demonstrate, that our Salvation could not be effected by the Sufferings and Death of Christ. This is impious Language! you hope to subvert the Foundation of the Hope and Comfort of Christians, and it will be a peculiar Satisfaction

<sup>(2)</sup> Socin. de Servat. P. iii. Cap. 2.

tion to you; to deprive them of the folid Ground they have to expect the Pardon of their Sins. through the Atonement of their only Redeemer! What Title therefore, can you have to be reckoned among the Number of them? Sir. let us hear your strong Arguments to demolish our Hopes of Salvation through Jesus Christ. S. I will; they are these, (1.) It is contrary to Justice to punish an innocent Man in the Room of the guilty. C. 1. It is so among Men, because they cannot make the innocent Man and the guilty become one in a legal Sense. 2. They have not Power over the Life, Limbs, or Ease of an innocent Person. 3. He hath no fuch Power. Consequently, 4. They may not require him to suffer, nor has he a Power to agree to fuffer corporally for any Person, who is a Delinquent. 5. But God had Power over the innocent Jesus, and might will, that he should suffer and die, and Christ had Power over his own Life, and might agree to lay it down, and actually did agree to refign it for us. And by Consequence, there was nothing of Injustice in it. (2.) Eternal Death was what we owed, according to the Constitution of God in his Law, and therefore, Christ could not pay that Debt. C. 1. The Eternity of our Punishment arises from our Incapacity to suffer what is due in a limited Time, and our unworthiness who suffer Penalty. 2. Infinite Value attended the Sufferings of Christ, arising from the infinite Dignity of his Person, and therefore, a Satisfaction was given by his Sufferings,

ferings, to Law and Justice, though they were short in Duration, and they became hereby available to the Salvation of Multitudes. S. 3. Christ's Obedience and Death were not both necessary, nor can they consist together, for if we are reckoned to have performed the whole of what the Law requires, by or in Christ, we must necessarily be innocent, and there can be no need of his suffering Punishment. On the other Hand, if he, by his Death, fully satisfied for our Sins, we must be thought to be just in confequence of that Satisfaction. C. 1. The Obedience of Christ satisfies the Law for our not being what we ought to be, viz. righteous, and makes us fo as it is imputed to us. 2. His Death is a Satisfaction to the Law for our being what we ought not to be, viz. Sinners, and both these are necessary in order to our Pardon and Acceptance. The former makes us just, and the latter discharges us of Guilt, and they are perfectly confishent. S. (4.) Christ did not Suffer what we Suffer, or are liable to fuffer for our Sins, viz. a Desparation of the Favour of God. C. That can only attend endless Punishment; it is not effential to divine Punishment to despair of the Favour of God; though it necessarily attends perpetual Penalty and the Knowledge that the fuffering Punishment, will have no End. S. (5.) What you call Punishment was not so, viz. the Sufferings of Christ. C. This is false, 1. He suffered in the Stead of Sinners; the Just suffered for the unjust. 2. Christ suffered for Sin, he was made Sin

Sin, and the Iniquity of us all was laid on him, and his Sufferings were inflicted on him in Relation to the Charge of our Guilt to him. 3. He was made a Curse in dying. 4. The Sword of divine Justice smote him. Things fully prove, that his Sufferings were of a penal Nature. S. (6.) Then the most light Suffering of Christ would have been equal to the Value of the most grievous of ours, and would have been sufficient. C. When we say, that the Sufferings of Christ were of infinite Value, we still maintain, that he was obliged, as our Surety, to fuffer that Curse our Sins demerited, that he must die, and in dying be made a Curse. Suffering this Penalty was necessary, and in order to Satisfaction an infinite Value was neceffarily required to attend his Sufferings. divine Nature gave Worth to the Sufferings of his human; but it did not excuse or render unnecessary those penal Sufferings of the human Nature. S. (7). What Christ suffered bath not greater Efficacy than the Sufferings of a mere Man. C. This is false; If an Offence is attended with greater Demerit, that is committed against God, than an Offence done against a mere Man, for the same Reason, the Sufferings of one who is God as well as Man, must have greater, yea infinitely greater Value and Efficacy, than the Sufferings of a mere Creature can possibly have. S. 8. In no other manner can this infinite Value be attributed to those Things which Christ suffered, except because he is the eternal God. But Christ could not.

not, as the eternal God, suffer any Thing. Wherefore, it is of no Weight to give infinite Efficacy to his Sufferings, that he is the eternal God, for it is not sufficient, that Christ who fuffered, was the eternal God, uniess also he bad suffered as the eternal God. C. This is most false, for it supposes, that the Action of him who is in his Person infinite, is nothing better than the Action of a mere Creature, except that Nature which is infinite, be the Subject of the Action. S. (9.) Let us suppose, that Christ really suffered in his divine Nature. C. I detest the Supposition, and you, Sir, advance it with no other View than to expose the Doctrine, I defend, to Contempt: But you become contemptible in supposing this, which is thought by none, and is most foreign to the Reasoning we use on this Subject. S. (10.) Then Christ satisfied himself, or paid bimself what was his Due. C. 1. The Person to whom the Satisfaction is given, was the Father, as our supreme and righteous Judge. 2. The Person who paid the Debt was the Son, as our Mediator and Surety. 3. It is no Abfurdity to fay, that this Satisfaction was given to the Father, to the Son and to the holy Spirit, as the one God effentially confidered; though it was given in or by the Person of the Son, who took our Nature upon him to that End. S. (11.) Calvin denies that Christ merited. C. Sir, you mistake him, he denies not, that Merit attended the Obedience and Sufferings of Christ; but denies, that he merited that, which rendered him a Subject capable of meriting, and

and that Glory which is confequent upon it, viz. his Union with the Son of God. S. (12.) Christ was obliged to obey the Law for himself, and therefore, his Obedience cannot justify others. C. He was made under the Law for others, and not for himfelf, or not to procure for himself a Title to Happiness and Glory, and therefore, he obeyed for others, to acquire for them a Right to Life. And he was the Surety and Representative of all those Perfons, on whose Account he was made under the Law, hence it is, that his Righteousness is imputed to them all, and is available to the Justification of each of them. S. Again afferted, that Calvin denied that Christ merited any thing of God for us, and produced some of his Words to prove it; which were principally these; Christ could not merit any thing, except of the good Pleasure of God. C. That is to fay, it was the good Pleasure of God to ordain the Man Christ Jesus, to such a Union with the eternal Word, as rendered him a proper and capable Subject of meriting; his Merit therefore, if we trace it up to the Fountain, we must allow it is the divine good Pleasure; but it by no means follows from hence, that real and true Merit did not attend what Christ did and fuffered. It is one thing to fay, that Christ became capable of meriting, by Vertue of the Decree of God, and another to deny, that he had true and real Merit; the former Calvin indeed affirms, the latter it does not appear that he ever thought it, the contrary he afferts, you very well know Sir. S. I do; But they

they are not to be reconciled, for they are repugnant. C. Calvin observes, that subordinate things are not opposite. S. This Rule does not take away the Repugnancy of these two things. For here is nothing subordinate; but the mutually Opposites are expressed of the same time and concerning the same things (b). C. Sir, you grossly mistake. 1. Calvin does not say, that it is the Will of God, that is the proximate Cause of the Merit of Christ; this he maintains is the Dignity of his Person, though he considers the divine Will as the first and original Cause of that Merit, in as much as it is the Refult of the divine Will, that he is able to merit. 2. The Obedience and Death of Christ are not the meritorious moving Cause of God's Will to fave us, for his Obedience and Death are Effects thereof. 3. They are the procuring Cause of the things willed, viz. Our Justification and eternal Salvation. And between these things there is not the least Repugnancy, nor did Calvin think, or fay there is. C. My Opinion of the Satisfaction of Christ receives evident Proof from various Testimonies of Scripture. 1. Sin was laid on Christ, he bore our Sins in his own Body on the Tree. He was made Sin for us. 2. He suffered and died for The Just suffered for the unjust. He loved us and gave himself for us: When we were without Strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. 3. He suffered that Curse from which

<sup>(1)</sup> Socin. de Servat. P. iii. Cap. 4, 5, 6. Calvin. Institut. Lib. ii. Cap. 16, 17.

which we enjoy a Deliverance in confequence of his Death. He suffered and died for our Sins. Our Saviour redeemed us from the Curje of the Law, being made a Curfe for us. And, therefore, it is afferted, That be put away Sin-that he purged our Sins-that his Blood cleanseth from all Sin-that by one Offering he bath perfected for ever them that are sanctified -That Peace is made by the Bood of his Cross -that be is the Propitiation for our Sins-that when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by his Death-that there is no Condemnation to them that are in him -that we shall be faved from Wrath through him. A Discharge from Guilt, Freedom from Condemnation, and Security from divine Vengeance, all follow upon the Death of Christ, as the certain and immediate Effects of it, and therefore, it must have been fatisfactory for our Offences. Sir, you can't but own said C. to S. that the Texts I have produced will bear the Construction I put upon them, without any Violence. S. could not deny that; but declared himself thus, Truly though it was not once, but often expressed in the sacred Pages (Satisfaction); yet I should not therefore believe, that the Matter really is as ye think it. For fince that cannot really be, I do not otherwise in many other Testimonies of Scripture, yea with all others than with one, fome Interpretation, which feems less improper, being advanced, I chuse that Sense out of Words of this fort, which is both confistent with itself, and is not opposite to the constant Tenor

Tenor of the same Scripture (c). S. declaring himself so plainly, there is the less need to acquaint the Reader, with what unnatural Interpretations, he put upon the various Texts, C. produced to support his Opinion of the Satisfaction of Christ, and with the Answers which C. gave to them. Besides, to do this; would, I fear, carry me to a much greater Length, than I intended in my Narrative of this Farther, the Reader may judge whether there is a Necessity for a different Exposition, to be given of those Texts from that of C's. If Christ's Satisfaction is a possible thing there is not: S. himself seems to grant that, and therefore, if C's Answers to S. are but sufficient to prove the Possibility of the thing, his Sense of those Texts ought to stand, S. himself being Judge. This I leave with the Reader to determine of, for himself. A. and B. objected to the Sentiments of C. concerning the Doctrine of Satisfaction, neither of them would allow, that Christ paid the same that was due from us. A. repeated several of the Objections of S. viz. That Christ did not suffer eternal Death-that the Love of God is the Fountain of Salvation—that Remission of Sin is a gratuitous Act of divine Mercy. All which C. had before answered (d). B. I cannot allow, that Christ paid the same which was due from us, because then no Conditions could be required of us in order to an actual Freedom from the Obligation.

<sup>( )</sup> Socin de Servat. P. iii. Cap. 6.

<sup>(1)</sup> Curcell. p. 300, 301. Limborch. p. 270, 271.

gation, that cannot confift with Payment, and complete Payment is not refusable; but Christ's was. C. 1. As an Effect of divine Love and Sovereignty, a Commutation is admitted, Christ's Name is put into the Obligation, as a Surety for us, instead of ours. 2. But though there is a Change of Persons, there is not of what is demanded in the Obligation. Christ paid what was due from us, though as to some Circumstances his Sufferings were different from ours. We stood obliged to suffer the Law's Curse, and that Christ endured in our Room. And, therefore, his Sufferings were a proper Payment of our Debt. Here was true Solution, which gave a prefent Being to our Right of Freedom from the Obligation, though we had not the Knowledge of our Right, nor were able to plead it. 3. What you contend for, viz. Acceptilation, if you will believe the Civilians, frees from the Obligation, as well as full and perfect Payment (c) 4. It is just, that it should fo do in the Infliction of corporal Punishment, on an innocent Person for the Guilty; for if the guilty Person is not cleared, but remains or comes afresh under the Obligation, and suffers Punishment, his Sponsor sustains an irreparable Injury, which is contrary to Right. And, therefore, it is a false Supposition which you make of the Return of pardoned Guilt (f).

5. This Commutation was refusable, God might have infifted on our suffering the Pe-B b 2 nalty

(°) Vinni. in Instit. p. 659.

<sup>(</sup>f) Appendix to Aphorisms p. 49, 50. Method. Theolog. P. iii. p. 339.

nalty and not have accepted of the Engagement of a Surety; but this Change of Persons in the Obligation proves no Change in what was demanded and paid in order to our Discharge. 6. You must deny the Reality of the Satisfaction of Christ, if you will maintain this-Sin is not taken away—Freedom from the Curse of the Law is not obtained—Security from Wrath is not effected by the Deathof Christ -Peace or Reconciliation is not made by the Blood of Christ. B. Each of these Things is done on the Part of the Surety; but the actual Possession of them depends upon the Performance of a certain Condition, agreed on by God and Christ our Surety, viz. taking of Christ or believing in bim (8). C. Either that is a possible or impossible Condition. If it is an impossible Condition, no Advantage arises to Sinners from the Death of our Saviour. B. It is a possible Condition. C. How does that appear? B. Thus; God affords fuch Help to Men, as is sufficient to enable them to perform that Condition. C. Does God regenerate and give Faith to them in order to the Act? B. No. but he gives fuch Grace as is fufficient to Regeneration, and to enable them to believe if they will. C. Can Men repent, believe in Christ, love God, hate Sin, and perform Acts of evangelical Obedience, before they are regenerated? B. I suppose you mean by these Enquiries, to prove, that Grace as a Habit is infused, and that the Infusion of the Habit, is prior to the

<sup>(2)</sup> Baxter's Appendix to Aphorisms, &cc. p. 140, 153.

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 373 the Act. C. I do. B. That I deny. C. By this, I think, we are naturally led to discourse of the Work of Regeneration, or of the Production of Faith in the Hearts of Men, by the Exertion of the Almighty Power of God.

V. S. A. B. We are fo. It feems you think faid they to C. that the Habit of Faith is infused. C. That is my firm Opinion: S. I cannot perfuade my felf of the Truth of that (h). A. Neither can I think, that Faith, Hope, and Love, are infused of God. 1. Because Faith comes by hearing Rom. x. C. That may respect the Act in Consequence of the Infusion of the Habit of Faith. The Word directs to the Act, to the Object on which it acts, and to the Fruits of that Act; but the Habit is not produced by Hearing. 2. God commands us to be endowed with Faith, Hope, and Love, and therefore, he will not immediately infuse them into us (1). C. 1. It is a Mistake, that God commands these Habits. They are supernatural, and what is fo, God does not Command. 2. Nor does he require such Acts of Men, as flow from these supernatural Principles, until the Infusion of those Principles. B. Ionce apprehended through Mr. Pemble, that the Habit precedes the Act; but upon second Thoughts, I return to the common Opinion. For God in his Operations, does not ordinarily violate the Order of Nature. C. It is pity you did not retain your former Sentiment, in this Point. You mistake Sir, B b 3 in

(1) Curcell. p. 169.

<sup>(</sup>h) Socin. de Servat. P. IV. Cap. 12.

in calling it the common Opinion: All Calvinists reject it; Socinians and Arminians indeed affert it, with whom you agree in many Particulars besides this. The Infusion of these Habits is not a Violation of the Order of Nature. They are supernatural, and what is so, must necessarily be infused, it cannot be acquired.

Gentlemen, the Reasons on which I found my Opinion, are these. 1. A Man must be made good, before he can put forth good Acts; fuch as the Ads of believing, hoping in, and loving of God are. Unless the Tree is made good, it cannot bring forth good Fruit. 2. Faith and Repentance are the Gifts of God. What is acquired is not given; and therefore, these Graces are infused, and not acquired. Untill these Habits take Place in the Hearts of Men, they have an Aversion to those Acts that flow from those Principles; and, consequently, they cannot put forth such Acts. If we acquire these Dispositions, by our own Acts, tho' it is as we are affifted by divine Grace, we make ourselves to differ from others. And the Reason why Peter believed, when Judas did not, was owing to himself principally, which is false. 5. A regenerate Perfon is the Subject of two Principles, Holiness and Sin. A Law in his Mind, and a Law in his Members. The latter which is called Flesh, serves the Law of Sin, and that only: The former ferves the Law of God, and only that; and, by Consequence, so long as he is not the

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 375 the Subject of the former, he cannot repent, believe, or love God, neither hate Sin. 6. It is either possible, or it is impossible, for a Man, in an unregenerate State, to believe, repent, and love God. If it is possible, then an unregenerate Man may believe and repent, and Regeneration is not necessary. If it is imposfible, then a Man must be regenerated, before he can do either of these Things; and Regeneration must be by the Infusion of gracious Habits into the Heart. 7. If gracious Acts precede gracious Habits, then those Acts are done without any Delight or Pleafure: For it is only the inner Man that delights in the Law of God. S. Tho' I deny the Infusion of Habits of Grace, yet I freely grant, that the Holy Spirit operates as a Sanctifier, Comforter and Witness, in the Minds of Men, in order to excite and move them to the Practice of Holiness; but so as to preferve the Liberty of the Will. Crellius on the Spirit. A. Tho' I cannot be perfuaded to think, that Habits are infused, yet I allow of a gracious Influence upon the Mind to stir it up to, and facilitate the Practice of Duty .--That Grace is always precedaneous, present, and subsequent, and that we can do nothing that is good, without the Assistance of divine Grace. B. I do not diffent from what S. and A. have

expressed concerning divine Assistance afforded to Men in the Performance of Good. I use to call it all necessary Help, or Grace ad esse. Baxter's

Catholic Theology, pag. 145. and Method. Theolog. Bb 4 Pars

Pars III. pag. 274. We neither of us deny a divine Operation on the Mind; by which the Will is excited and stirred up to chuse what is good and agreeable to the Will of God: Only we cannot think, that it is necessarily determined to act, by an irresistible Instuence upon it; because that would deprive it of its natural Liberty in acting; and Men must be considered as involuntary in the Good they do, thro' this irresistible Almighty Instuence upon them, which it is absurd to think.

C. I observe, Gentlemen, that you are more modest in speaking on this Subject; particularly, with Relation to the Infusion of good Habits, than is usual with you, and you feem to have very little to object to it. A. has offered two Reasons against it; both which have been, as I think, fully answered. If this single Point against which you have so little to object can but be proved, all I defire to maintain, will unavoidably be established; and the Liberty of the human Will, must be allowed to be preferved. Now, befides, the Reasons I before offered to confirm my Opinion, of the Infusion of gracious Habits or Principles, which, I apprehend, are sufficient; some Testimonies of Scripture, in Favour of it, you may permit me to produce. The first is fer. xxxii. 40. I will put my Fear in their Hearts, that they shall not depart from me. It is one Thing to excite Men to a Reverence of God; and another to put or implant a Fear and Reverence of him in their Hearts; and it is the latter that is promised

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 377 mised in this Scripture. The second is Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. A new Heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you, and I will take away the Heart of Stone out of your Flesh, and I will give you an Heart of Flesh. This Testimony is so full to the Purpose, that nothing can be faid which will stifle its Evidence in Favour of the Truth for which I plead. By the Heart of Flesh must be intended a holy Disposition to what is good. and if fuch a Disposition is given of God, it necessarily follows, that it is infused or implanted of him, for in no other Sense can it be a Gift. This is not a Promise to excite and stir up the Mind to Good, but it is a Promise to give a Disposition to what is good. A. The Heart of Stone consisted with the Freedom of the Will. C. So does this giving of a Heart of Flesh. And in Consequence of the Infusion of this holy Disposition, Good is freely chosen. And as the Will is not actively concerned in the Reception of what is infused; so it opposes not that Infusion of good Habits, it holds itself entirely passive therein. A. This is promised to the whole House of Israel. C. That is a Mistake; it is only promifed to those, who were included in the new Covenant, Heb. viii. viz. the Elect of God; they were not all Ifrael, who were of Israel, neither because they were of the Seed of Abraham, where they all Children. The old Covenant comprised all the Israelites, not fo the new Covenant; this Promise belongs to the new, and not to the old Covenant; and,

therefore,

therefore, it is made to a felect Number of that People only. A. This Promise was not fulfilled'till after many Days, appears from Jer. xxxi. 31. a parallel Place with this. C. This is most evidently false; for in all Ages, some among that People were faved: None of them could be faved by the old Covenant; they, as we now are, were faved by the new Covenant; and, consequently, the Promises of the new Covenant related to them, and were fulfilled in them. That respects the fuller Manifestation of the new Covenant, when the old Covenant vanished away, and no longer continued in Force. A. God ascribes some Effects to himself, when he doth those Things, which are required on his Part, and have a singular Efficacy to produce the Effects: Altho' they do not follow because of the desperate Malice or Evil of Men, Ezek. xxiv. 13. Hof. vii. 1. Chap. ii. 1, 2, 3. (k). C. It is trifling to talk at this Rate; God either infuses, or he does not infuse good Dispositions; that is the Thing promised; and, as was before observed, the Will of Man is not actively concerned in it, he neither wills it, nor nills it. The Texts referred to, do not speak of a Work of God upon Men, wherein they are passive; but of outward Means used with them for Reformation, which is most foreign to our present Subject.

Let the third Testimony be, those Scriptures which speak of Faith and Repentance as divine

<sup>(1)</sup> Limborch pag. 384, 385.

divine Gifts, and deny that Faith is of ourselves, and affert that we make not ourselves to differ, and which affirm that our new Birth is of God, exclusively of any other Cause. To stir up a Man to believe and repent, is not to give him Faith and Repentance. It is the Insusion of those Graces only, that can properly denominate them Gifts. To affish Men in acquiring

of those Graces, is not giving them.

C. added, Gentlemen, fince there is fuch strong Evidence given in Favour of my Opinion, of the Infusion of gracious Principles into the Hearts of Men: And fince you have fo little to object to it, and what you do object is capable of fo clear Answers, I hope you will no longer oppose it. If you grant this one thing, indeed, you will deprive your felves of many of your Objections, against my Sentiments concerning the Nature of the divine Influences on the Minds of Men. which, perhaps, may occasion you to decline granting it, though it by no Means ought. If this is allowed then, 1. It will follow, that Men are active in reforming from Vice, according to my Opinion, which you deny, and charge me with holding the contrary. For what I maintain is, that we are passive in the Reception of those heavenly Principles; but, that we are active in doing Good in confequence of the Infusion of those gracious Habits. 2. It appears from hence, that God certainly works in an irrefistible Manner upon us, without destroying our Free Agency. For, (1.) It is not lost in the Infusion of these Principles, because the Will is not, nor can be concerned in the Infusion of them. It neither wills, nor nills, in this gracious A& of God upon us. (2.) Upon the Infusion of those Principles, we are excited and stirred up by the Grace of God to act what he has given us a Disposition unto, which is not doing any Violence to our Will, it is only directing and moving of it towards fuch Objects and fuch Acts, which it hath a Biass and Disposition towards, as it is fanctified by the bleffed Spirit. D. Now spoke again, and declared, that he was convinced thoroughly of his Prejudices against Christianity. and expressed a great deal of Pleasure, that he had an Opportunity of hearing the Principles of the Christian Religion so freely debated, and so fully cleared of the Objections raised against them. Whereupon A. faid to D. Sir, do not yet conclude upon the Truth of the Principles of C. for I have many Things to object to his Opinion of the final Perseverance of the Saints, which I am persuaded he will not be able to answer; and if those Objections should prove unanswerable, all that he has advanced concerning Election, the Satisfaction of Christ, and Justification by his Righteousness must neceffarily be given up: this perhaps has not occurred to your Thoughts, and therefore, you express your self in the manner you do. D. Sir, if C. pleases to enter upon that Subject, I promise diligently to attend to your Objections against that Doctrine, as well as to the Answers of C.

to those Objections, and his Arguments in Favour of it, and shall endeavour to form my Judgment concerning that Point, which I clearly discern, is of great Importance, with the utmost Impartiality. A. You say well, Sir. C. I will first state my Opinion in this Matter, then hear your Objections, and return Answers, and advance some Arguments to prove what I affert, and endeavour to vindicate those Arguments from your Exceptions. A. The Method you

propose to take, I approve of very well.

VI. C. My Opinion is this, that Persons who are the Subjects of Regeneration, never fall into an unregenerate State, though they may be guilty of many Miscarriages, to the Dishonour of God and to their own great Distress: Or that those gracious Habits which are infused into them at the time of their Regeneration, are never lost, though the Exercise of their Graces may be greatly interrupted. A. That a regenerate Person may sink into an unregenerate State, or fall from his Righteousness; I thus prove. 1. From what is expressed in Ezek. xviii. to that Purpose. C. I deny, that the Righteousness there spoken of, intends Sanctification, or that the righteous Man there mentioned, is a regenerate fanctified Person. (1.) It is no other Righteousness than what was required in the Law of Moses, as a Condition of enjoying temporal Peace and Affluence, which is there defigned. (2). It is spoken on Occasion of the Jews murmuring under their Afflictions, in a Civil Senfe, and is intended to obviate those

those Objections which they advanced against the righteous Dispensations of God in his Providence, agreeable to the Nature of that Covenant, in which they were included as a Nation. (3.) The Righteousness required in that Covenant entitled them to temporal Favours; but not to eternal Blessings. And therefore, (4.) It is not evangelical Righteousness, that is there spoken of, nor is the righteous Man mentioned in that Place, a regenerate sanctified Person, and therefore, this Instance entirely fails of proving what it is offered as a Proof of.

2. A. From Matt. xiii. 19, 20. C. Those Perfons who fall away are compared to stony Ground, to a Rock, and therefore, they have not a Heart of Flesh given them, the Word has no Root in them, they stand distinguished from Persons, who have honest and good Hearts, hence we must conclude, that such a Heart they have not, and consequently, they are not regenerate Persons. Nor is it said, that in a time of Temptation they receive the Word, but in that time they quit a Regard to it.

A. The third Instance I bring to prove the Possibility of the total Apostacy of the Saints, is Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. and Chap. x. 26. C. Some have interpreted the former of true Believers; but have apprehended, that not a final Falling is intended, but a Backsliding, which true Believers may be guilty of, and that not the Impossibility of their Renewal unto Repentance is design'd, but the Impossibility of their renewing themselves unto Repentance, is the thing afferted; and if this is the Sense of the Text, it affords

no Argument in Favour of the Opinion of the total and final Apostacy of the Saints. See Mr. Matthias Maurice's Discourse on the Place. He feems in my Opinion indeed to be a little too pofitive in his Exposition of the Words, and I think, is guilty of some Mistakes. He afferts, that a more glorious Description of true Believers is not to be found in all the Gospel. This is carrying the Matter very far I own. Perhaps, those Words of the Apostle may justly be thought to contain a more certain and glorious Description of the Saints, than this Text'expresfes: But ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Here is not a Word faid of these Persons, being washed from Sin, or of their being justified, or of their being sanctified by the bleffed Spirit. Besides, he is, I think, mistaken in afferting that metavoia always signifies evangelical Repentance, it hath not that Sense in Matt. xii. 41. where the Ninevites are said to have repented at the preaching of Jonah. Another Mistake of his is, that παραδειγματειζει, which we render put to open Shame, is of indifferent Signification, that it may be taken in a good or bad Sense. The Septuagint use it in Numb. xxv. 4. and Jer. xxiii. 22. and Ezek. xxviii. 17. in all which Places, it fignifies to expose to Shame, Reproach and Contempt. And they have never used it in a good Sense. In Mat. i. and xix. the Word is used, where it must be interpreted in the like Senfe. To affert without

any Instance to prove, what is afferted, carries very little Evidence or Authority in it; besides, as the Son of God is not expressed, which is bis Observation, neither is the Term themselves mentioned, which he fupplies, and that supply does not feem very natural, nor can it, I think, be admitted of, the Son of God, immediately before spoken of, is, I apprehend, to be understood, he whom those Persons are said to crucify to themselves a-fresh, they put to open Shame. Again to act Faith on Christ, as a crucified Saviour, can't be called a crucifying bim; but to approve of the Jews Conduct in crucifying bim, as an Impostor, is properly a crucifying him, afresh to a Man's self, or in his Mind, which the Apostle seems to design. Another Mistake is, this Gentleman observes, that Briars and Thorns in the 7th ver. intend the finful Works of Believers which are to be burnt up: But no agrees not with anavaa and Tersonos but with In the Earth, that will be burnt up. Which is a strong Objection against his Interpretation. For, by this the inspired Writer expresses the certain Destruction of the Persons concerning whom he fpeaks, and not the confurning of their Works. And, therefore, Believers, I think, cannot be intended in this Text: But fuch Persons, who bring forth no Fruit that is acceptable to God, tho' their Knowledge and Gifts are extraordinary. The Illumination spoken of, only intends, as I apprehend, an Acquaintance with evangelical Truths, in a notional Way. Tasting of the beavenly

heavenly Gift, i. e. the Gifts of the Holy Spirit, intends tome Experience, not of his Graces, but of his extraordinary and miraculous Gifts, which were in those Times afforded, in Confirmation of the Gospel: And this, I conceive. is explained by these Persons, being said to be made Partakers of the Holy Ghost: Not of his Graces, but of his Gifts; for this Phrase seems to be exegetical of the former. Tasting of the good Word of God, intends some Experience of the Power of that Word; but not in a gracious spiritual Manner, or feeding upon it, and receiving spiritual Nourishment from it, as those who eat and digest the Truths of it do. Tasting fometimes stands opposed to receiving, when he had tasted, he would not drink. By the Powers of the World to come, are not intended the Joys of Heaven: For the World to come, defigns the New Testament State. God hath not put in Subjection to Angels, the World to come, viz. the New Testament Church. The Powers of that World or State, are those extraordinary Gifts bestowed, and those miraculous Works performed, for the Confirmation of the Religion of Jesus, mentioned in ch. ii. ver. 3. of this Epittle. God also bearing them Witness with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghoft, according to his own Will. Tasting of those Powers, means an Experience of fuch furprizing Effects existing, by seeing them wrought, and having Power to produce them, from the Holy Spirit, which some Unbelievers had

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an Experience of. Many will fay unto me in that Day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophehed in thy Name? And in the Name have cast out Devils? And in thy Name have done many wonderful Works: And then will I profess unto them. I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work Iniquity. In these Persons is Illumination, or an Acquaintance with the Gofpel, fo far as to be able to preach it to others. They have an Experience of the heavenly Gift, i. e. of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: And, therefore, they may be faid to be Partakers of the Holy Ghost. They have some Experience of the Power of the Word, tho' not in a spiritual Manner, and of the Power of the New Testament Church, whereby the Gospel is confirmed. And all these Things without the Graces of Faith, Hope, or Love, &c.

Farther, the Apostle Paul supposes, that there may be Eloquence, Illumination, or an Understanding of all Mysteries, all Knowledge. that there may be all Faith, i. e. of working Miracles; that there may be Benevolence, and a Readiness to suffer Death, without the Grace of Love in the Heart, which feem to me, as great Things, as any here expressed; and, therefore, all these Things may be true of unregenerate Persons. Tho' I speak with the Tongues of Men and Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as founding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal. And tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge, and tho' I have all Faith, so that

I could remove Mountains, and have not Charity. I am nothing. And the' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and tho' I give my Body to be burned, and have no Charity, it profiteth me nothing. If Perfons, who possessed that Knowledge of Christianity, and those extraordinary Gifts by which it was confirmed, to be of divine Original, fell away from it, and despised and reviled the great Author of it: It was impossible to renew them again to Repentance, i. e. it was not agreeable to the Will of God, to give them Repentance, or to reclaim them from that their wilful and malicious Opposition to the Gospel. This I take to be the true Sense of the Apostle in this Text. 1. Then we learn, that no Person whether regenerate, or ungenerate, can be guilty of that dreadful Sin, with all its Aggravations, in this Day, which the Apostle there treats of. And, consequently, 2. The Words can furnish us out with no Argument to prove the final Apostacy of the Saints. To which Purpose, Sir, you have produced them. The other Text in chap. x. 26. expresses much the fame Sense. Sinning there intends a Renunciation of the Gospel, as here falling away designs it. The Sanctification of the Person sinning is not meant, but the Sanctification of Christ, who fanctified himself for our Sakes, that we might be sanctified by divine Trnth.

A. Let the fourth Instance be, 2 Pet. ii. 19, 20, 21, 22. C. The Persons there spoken of, were outwardly reformed; but not inwardly sanctified. As the Dog is the same in his Nature and Disposition, when thro' any Cause he C c 2 abstains

obstains from his Vomit: And as the Sow that is washed, is the same in her Nature and Disposition; so are those Persons the very same in their Nature and Disposition, notwithstanding this Change in their Conduct. They are not Sons; but Dogs: They are not Sheep; but Swine: And, therefore, nothing can from hence be concluded against the certain Perseverance of the Saints. And the Apostacy of these Perfons is attended with very aggravating Circumstances. For they fin against much Knowledge, and clear Convictions of Conscience.

A. I have Examples to produce, 1. David. C. That holy Man finned grievously indeed; but that is no Proof of the Loss of the Habits of Grace in him, tho' it is of those Habits, for that Time, not exerting themselves. Your Reasoning supposes, that upon a regenerate Man's finning, he finks into a State of Unregeneracy; if that is true, then the Friend of God, the Father of the faithful, became unregenerate; and also Job, and Jeremiah, and Hezekiah, and Jonah, and Peter, &c. which is false. If this is proved, it must be either from an Act of Sin itself, or from some other Principle. If from an Act of Sin itself, then it will follow, that an Act of Sin cannot confift with Regeneration, which is most certainly false, for in many Things we offend all. If from other Principles, it is weak and impertinent to argue from the finful Act. And other Principles you have not to prove it from. Except God's immutable and inseparable Love, the Stability

a Calvinist, a Socinian, &c. 389 of the Covenant of Grace, the Efficacy of Christ's Death, the Justification of the Persons of the Saints by his Righteoufness, the Spirit's Abode with them for ever, Christ's prevalent Intercession with the Father for them, that their Faith fail not, can be the Principles from which fuch Proof may be fetched, which I should think, it is evident they are These Things are a sufficient Answer to your fecond Example, viz. Solomon. A. The third Example is Hymeneus and Alexander, who made Shipwreck of Faith, and a good Conscience. C. This respects their acting contrary to the Convictions of Conscience, thro' the Influence of corrupt Principles and Prejudices, which unregenerate Men often do, in an Opposition to the Gospel, not admitting the clearest Evidence, to be fufficient Proof of the Truth of those Doctrines, that approve not themselves to their vitiated Taste. A. The fourth Example is Demas, 2 Tim. iv. 10. C. 1. Demas might be a Minister, and yet not be a Believer. Judas was a Minister, but he was not a regenerate Person. 2. He might thro' too much Love to the Things of this World, be influenced to defert his Service in the Church, at least for a Time, and yet not loofe those Principles of Grace, which were implanted in his Heart, if it must be concluded that he was a Believer. Jonah declined his Duty thro' Pride, without the Lofs of gracious Principles in his Heart. And Demas might so do, thro' Covetousness, without fuch a Lofs.

Cc 3

A. Divine Exhortations, Threatnings, and Promises, are in vain, except Believers may fall away from their Faith and Holinefs. C. Sir, you are very much mistaken: For, 1. Tho' the Certainty of the Perseverance of true Believers, is a Truth; none have Reason to conclude. that they are such, but those whose Hearts are disposed to Piety and Holiness. 2. Some may make a Profession of Faith, and fall from that Profession; the Things expressed are singularly useful to excite us to a due Consideration, whether we are Subjects of true Faith or not. This is a Perseverance not in Sin, but in Holiness: If, therefore, Peter denies his Lord wirh dreadful Aggravations, in that Circumstance, it not his Business to be easy and unconcerned, notwithstanding his grievous Crimes; but his proper Bufiness is to mourn, and humble himself before God for his Sin; and unless he fo does, he has no Evidence of Grace in his Heart; and, consequently, it would be a Contradiction in him to conclude upon his Perseverance in Holiness. These Things, therefore, are of great Use to guard the Saints from finning, and to excite them to evangelical Repentance, when they have finned. 4. Hence it appears, that they are proper Means to preserve in the Saints, Watchfulness, spiritual Diligence, and to prevent carnal Confidence and Prefumption in all Professors, and contain nothing inconfistent with the precious Truth of the certain Perseverance of the People of God. 5. No Man can be assured of Perseverance, but

in the Use of the Means appointed of God to that End, and which he will undoubtedly blefs, and render effectual. When Hezekiah was promifed Life, it gave him no Ground to imagine, that his Life would be preferved without Food, or the' he should drink Poison. And God's Promifes to preserve the Saints to his Kingdom and Glory, do not imply, that they may neglect the Means he has directed to, in order to promote Holiness in them, or that they may venture on fuch Practices, as tend to the Ruin of their Souls. A. Now, Sir, I shall answer your Arguments for your Opinion, and you have produced a large Catalogue of Scriptures, Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. Isa. liv. 10. lix. 21. Hof. ii. 19. Pfalm exxv. 1. John iv. 14, 24. vi. 35, 37, 39, 44, 56, 57. x. 27, 28. Mat. xvi. 18. C. These are not all the Scriptures by many, wherein my Sentiments, relating to this Point are expressed. But to pass that now, let me hear your An-Iwers to them. A. I begin with fer. xxxii. 39, 40. That cannot contain an absolute Promise of Perseverance, because it is made to all the People of Israel. C. That is a Mistake, as I have before observed, this is a Promise of the new Covenant; all the People were not included in the new, tho' they were in the old Covenant. A. By the Words in Mat. xvi. 18. it is not promised, that the Church shall not fall from Faith, and so may cease to be a Church: But that Death shall not prevail against the Church, or that Believers shall not be held of Cc4 Death.

Death, but shall be raised again from the dead to everlasting Life. C. Our Saviour is speaking of building his Church, which respects the present State; and this Promise relates to the Church in this State; Death therefore cannot be intended. Besides adns is several Times put for Hell, Mat. xi. 23. Luke xvi. 23. and the Gates of Hell, defign the Powers of Darkness. And this is a gracious Promise of the Church's Safety, notwithstanding all Oppofition from the infernal Powers, which must necessarily include her final Perseverance. A. John x. 27, 28, 29, is to be taken in the same Sense. If the Sheep of Christ, do not cease to be his Sheep, they shall be happy. C. I. Faith does not make us the Sheep of Christ, we are his Sheep, before we believe; and because we are his Sheep, we receive Faith: As others, because they are not his Sheep, receive it not. Hence our Lord fays, other Sheep I have, which are not of this Fold, them also I must bring, and there shall be one Fold, and one Shepherd. And ye believe not, because ye are not of my Sheep. 2. This puts the Security of the Sheep, not upon their being in Christ's Hand, but upon their own Will and Obedience; which is as contrary to the Words, as any Thing can be. 3. Our Lord declares, that they shall never perish, that he gives to them eternal Life. How then can they cease to be his Sheep? 4. If eder none can pluck them out of his Hand, nor out of the Father's Hand: I defire to know, (1.) Whether they

can become Goats, before they are out of Christ's Hand, and out of the Father's Hand? (2.) Whether Christ and the Father suffer them to drop out of their Hands; fince none, neither Sin, nor Satan, nor the World, can pluck them out of their Hands? 3. Whether they do not perish, upon being let fall out of the Hand of Christ, and out of the Hand of the Father? 4. If they do perish, and enjoy not eternal Life; how will you be able to maintain the Veracity of Christ, who has faid, that they shall never perish, and that he gives to them eternal Life? These are Questions, that I will not require a speedy Answer to, because great Difficulty attends answering them. I therefore, leave them to your farther Confideration. But pray, Sir, why do not you give fome Answer to the other Texts produced in Favour of my Opinion; your slipping them over in Silence, tempts me to imagine, that you think them unanswerable. A. I will consider some other Places of Scripture, which you alledge to this Purpose: First, Mat. xxiv. 24. If possible, does not always signify Impossibility; but frequently the great Difficulty of a Thing. C. Then you allow it is very difficult to deceive the Elect of God; it is therefore to be hoped, that it does not often at least happen, if in any Instance, this does happen. Your critical Remark is trifling; for it makes no Difference, whether the Word is taken actively or passively, the fame Thought is expressed. It is evidently supposed, that others would be deceived; but

the very emphatical Manner in which our Lord expresses himself, according to both Evangelists xaires, exdextes, also the Elect; is an evident Indication of the Impossibility of their

being deceived as others are.

2. You have urged, I John ii. 19. 1. Believers may depart from the Church at least, for a Time. C. This intends a Renunciation of the Religion of Jesus Christ, at least, of its fundamental Principles, from which true Believers shall be preserved. A. 2. It does not intend that true Believers always continue with the Church: but only that the Believer so long as he is, and continues a Believer, does not desert the Congregation and Society of Believers, &c. C. To be of us, is to be of the Number of the true Members of Christ's Church; these Persons were never fuch, for if they had, they would not have denied Christ; they denied the Son of God, and by the Denial of him, it appeared that they never truly believed in him; for if they had fo believed, they would not have denied him; this is the plain Sense of the Text. And a strong Argument it affords us in Favour of the final Perseverance of the Saints, or of their certain Preservation from a fatal Seduction, by the Enemies of Christ, their only Saviour and Lord. A. 3. You argue from Rom. viii. 35, 37, 38, 39. The Apostle there speaks of the Love wherewith God loved us. C. True, he does so, and you may spare yourself the Trouble of proving a Matter, that is so very evident. A. God viewing their Faith and Love.

Love, greatly loves them, and will deliver them out of all Afflictions, yea be will raise them from Death itself, and give to them eternal Life, this is the Sense of the Apostle in that Place. C. 1. Then God loves us because we love him. or our Love to him is the Caufe of his Love to us, which is false, for we love him, because be first loved us. 2. Either we may be separated from divine Love, or we cannot: To fay that we may, is to contradict the Apostle; and, therefore, we cannot lose our Interest in the Grace, Love and Favour of God. 3. Hence it follows, that we shall not totally and finally fall; the Interest we have in the Love of God, will certainly prevent our total Apostacy. A. Sin separates a Man from God, Isa. lix. 1. C. As to Communion it does for a Time; but not with Respect to an Interest in his Favour: Nor can it, without supposing a Change in God; because he always knew the Part that Man would act. A. Nor is what you urge from 1 John iii. 9. a sufficient Proof of your Opinion; for the Term abiding, is not to be taken here in its proper Signification, as it denotes Duration and Continuance, &c. C. Why fo? What Necessity is there to understand it in an improper Sense? You do not seem to be able to affign any Reason for it; and without a Reason, I can't agree to your Affertion; because the Holy Spirit is in the Saints, a Well of Water springing up into everlasting Life. Limborch from page 712, to 726. Sir,

Sir, There are many Arguments to be advanced to prove this Point, besides those you have took some Notice of, viz. That the Love of God is unchangeable.—That his Purpose is unalterable.—That his Covenant is fure and inviolable, its Promises sure, and its Mercies sure. —That Sin is forgiven to the Saints through the Blood of Christ.—That they are not subject to Condemnation.-That therefore, they shall be faved from Wrath.—That they are justified or made righteous by the Obedience of Christ, and are Heirs of eternal Life.—That they are the Sons of God.—That they are Members of Christ, and cannot be separated from him. -That the holy Spirit dwells in them and will abide with them for ever.—That whom God calls, he justifies, and whom he justifies, them he also glorifies.—That God's Faithfulness stands engaged for the complete Sanctification of the Saints.-That there is Ground of Confidence, that in whomsoever a good Work is begun, it shall be performed untill the Day of Christ.—That the Intercession of Christ, that Faith may not fail, and that his People may be with him, in Heaven, is prevalent.—And that there is proper Foundation of strong Coniolation, and a firm Persuasion of enjoying suture Blessedness, in Believers. In a Word, you must either prove, that the Gospel is not true, or you must grant, that the Salvation of Believers is certain and infrustrable, thro' the Grace of God, the Redemption of Christ, and the fanctifying Influences of the bleffed Spirit. B.

B. I cannot but in great part, be of the Mind of A. with respect to the Subject now under Consideration, only I think, that the Elect will sinally persevere. But I apprehend, that the Perseverance of the Non-elect is not infallibly secured, though this, I think, that Grace sufficient to enable them to persevere, will be communicated to them of God. Baxter's Catholic

Theolog. B. XI. p. 215.

C. 1. I demand of you to prove, that one Non-elect Person has ever believed. It is trifling to talk of their persevering in Faith, before you prove, that they are any of them Subjects of that Grace. If you do this, I promife to yield the whole Caufe to you. I boldly affirm with the Apostle, that the Election bath obtained it, and the rest were blinded. You Sir, may affert the contrary, if you please; but I am determined not to believe you, if you do. 2. No Person upon your Principle can possibly be assured of Salvation, more than upon the Principle of A. Peter could not, Paul could not, without a special Revelation from God; for though a Man may know that he is a Believer, he cannot conclude upon his Election to Salvation, because according to your Opinion, Faith is not an Evidence of an Interest in Election-Grace, for a Non-elect Person may believe, love God, repent, and hate Sin, love and defire Holiness, as you conceive, and confequently, a Man may experience all these Things, and yet have no certain Ground to conclude, that he is chosen to Salvation; he may therefore, for ought he can possibly know,

be appointed to Wrath, upon God's Fore-Sight, that he will not persevere in Faith and Holiness. His Perseverance is uncertain to him, because, though the Elect shall persevere, he has no way of knowing, whether he is one of that Number or not; his Perseverance being uncertain, he can have no certain Knowledge of his Salvation. And of courfe, no one Saint in the World, under any Circumstance, could have, or can have an Affurance of his future Bleffedness, according to your Opinion. This not only destroys the Foundation of that strong Consolation, it is the Will of God, that the Heirs of Promise, who have fled for Refuge, to lay hold on the Hope set before them, should enjoy; but it is subversive of many of the Fundamental Doctrines of the everlasting Gospel. Of the eternal and immutable Love of the Father, Son, and Spirit.—Of the Stability of the Covenant of Grace, and really turns it into a Covenant of Works.—Of the Redemption of Christ, or of his Satisfaction, by his Sufferings and Death .- Of the effectual Operations of the bleffed Spirit, upon the Minds of Men; and refolves eternal Salvation, into the Will of Man, as the principal Cause thereof, eventually, at least, and therefore, Sir, I think, your Opinion is not to be endured by Christians. Nor can it without doing great Dishonour to the Grace of God, and depriving the Saints of the folid Foundation, of their spiritual Peace, Joy, and firm Hope of future Happiness. D.

D. Gentlemen, I give you my hearty Thanks for your free Conversation on the momentous Doctrines, that have come under your Confideration, I hope all my Prejudices against Revelation are fully removed. As I told you, before you entred upon this Debate, I really thought, that the Principles of C. were afferted in the Scripture, and esteeming them absurd, I could not be perfuaded of the divine Authority of a Book, that recommends abfurd Doctrines, by any external Evidences, which may be pleaded in its Favour. Upon this Principle it was, that I rejected the Christian Revelation. And I affure you, that I know many of the Deifts, who are in the very fame Cafe. They plainly differn, that the Sentiments of C. are delivered in the Bible, and thinking them repugnant to Reason they cannot be persuaded, that the Scripture is a Revelation from God. As to the Objections which are advanced against the Word of God, by the Author of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion, and other Writers of his Stamp, they are of very little Weight; and would have as little Influence, upon the Minds of many of the Deists, to prejudice them against Revelation, if they were not prepoffessed with an Opinion of the Absurdity of its peculiar Doctrines: I mean those Principles, which C. has advanced and defended; I must beg Leave to say, to my full Satisfaction, for they are fenfible, that those Principles, really are contained in the Writings of the Old and New Testament, and make

up the chief Part of Revelation. They think it is ridiculous to affert, that the Scripture is the only Rule of Faith, and at the same time, take the Liberty to explain away those Ideas, which the Language of it naturally conveys; and to infift upon it, that the Terms and Expressions of the Bible, are not to be understood in their proper and natural Import. For this Practice, fay they, can't possibly be vindicated, upon any other Principle than this, viz. that we have an Acquaintance with the Nature of those Subjects, about which the Scripture treats, independently of that Revelation, from Reason and the Light of Nature. And if it is allowed, that Reason can furnish us with the Knowledge of most of the Doctrines of Revelation, that Revelation was not necessary to the Happiness of Mankind, and, consequently, to fay the least, no great Danger can attend the Rejection of it; but upon a Persuasion of the Absurdity of its Doctrines they can't but reject it. And therefore, Gentlemen, who are of either of your Opinions, S. A. and B. are not proper to undertake the Defence of the holy Scripture against them; at least not perfectly fo; for they are astonished, that any can think, that the Principles of C. are not afferted therein, and, consequently, the only way of convincing them of the Truth of Revelation, is to vindicate those Principles from a Charge of Absurdity, which they are taught by you to load them with. In short, they laugh at those Defenders of the Christian Religion, who de-

ny the Sentiments of C. and maintain, that they are not delivered in the facred Writings; because they observe, that those Gentlemen are obliged to put forced Interpretations on the Language of a Book which they profess to make the Rule of their Faith, and that they do this in almost all the Subjects whereof it treats. This, say they, is not to take the Scripture for a Rule of Faith, but Reason independent of Revelation, which they pretend to defend.

C. faid to S. A. and B. Gentlemen, I hope you will confider of what D. has now expressed. I have long thought, that this is the Fact, that many of the Deifts, are fully perfuaded, that my Sentiments are contained in the Bible, and that because they think them absurd, for that very Reason, they dare to reject it. Whereupon they faid to C. Sir, we are not able to difcover the Propriety of your Advice, for it is a Principle with you, that Men without divine Illumination, are not able to understand the Scripture, or the Doctrines of Revelation, and that God does not afford this irradiating Influence to many, if, therefore, it is not his sovereign Pleafure to enlighten our dark Minds, by the Rays of his divine Light, how is it possible for us, to discern bis Truths? C. You seem determined in all Things to misrepresent my Sentiments. I am confident, that Men, by the Exercise of their reasoning Powers upon the Word of God, may discover that the Doctrines for which I contend are true, or that they are really con-Dd tained

tained in the holy Scripture; tho' they cannot discern their Excellency, Glory and Importance, without that spiritual Illumination which you mention. And these are very different Things. I do not think, nay, I know the contrary, that the Language of Revelation, is obscure and unintelligible; it is plain and easy to be understood of all; and, therefore, none ought to complain of a Want of necessary Means of knowing what we are required to believe. The Language of the Scripture, is fo clear and fo strong, in Favour of my Sentiments, that you find yourselves obliged very often, to depart from the natural Signification of its Terms and Phrases, to evade the Force of the Evidence they afford of the Truth of my Principles, which as D. has observed, is in Fact to reject it as a Rule of Faith, in all fuch Instances, and to attend to Reason in Matters, which are quite out of its Compass. And this is not to act the Part of Christians. Let me therefore, prevail with you to be guilty of it no more, from this Time. now addressed himself to the Gentleman, whom I have all along called a Deift, but I must now call him a Christian, and bespoke him thus. Sir, It gives me a Pleasure not to be expressed, that our Debate has had this happy Issue, to convince you of your Prejudices against evangelical Truths, or of the divine Original of the Christian Religion; I pray God, that you may experience the benign Influences of his Grace, to affift you in the Practice of all those Duties.

Duties, which justly demand your constant Attention; that you may enjoy folid and lafting Peace in your own Mind, and that you may adorn the precious Truths, you declare that you have received a clear and full Conviction of. Confider this, that Persons of the Sentiments of S. A. and B. are very much disposed to traduce fuch, who embrace the Principles, you and I now unite in maintaining; pray, therefore, that the Grace of God may teach you to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present World. That so, it may never be faid, that upon your embracing thefe Principles, you became vain in your Converfation. Be careful, that Truth, divine Truth, don't fuffer by your taking upon you the Profession of it. Then he observed that S. A. and B. pretended to give the Honour of our Salvation to the gratuitous Favour of God; but that in Reality they founded it upon, and refolved it into, the Will of Man. That S. denied the whole of the Satisfaction of Christ. That A. denied the Reality of his Satisfaction, tho' he spoke of his dying for us, becoming a Sacrifice, and obtaining Redemption, and making Peace and Reconciliation by his Death.—That B. also denied the Reality of his Satisfaction; not allowing that he paid our Debt, or that he suffered the Punishment which our Sins demerited, only granting, that the Death of Christ was accepted of God as a Ransom for us to this End, that he might Dd 2 pardon

pardon and fave us on what Conditions foever he sees proper to require of us; that therefore, in our Remission, God does not appear to be just or righteous, upon the Foundation of the Death of his Son. That S. A. and B. agree in maintaining, that our own Works justify us in the Sight of God our supreme Judge.-That B. founds our Acceptance at the last Day, not upon the Obedience of Christ, our only Saviour; but upon our own Faith and Obedience, tho' he talks of the Imputation of the Obedience of Christ, as to its Effects, which is altogether impossible.—That tho' S. A. and B. allow of divine Aids and Affistances, yet they deny the Infusion of gracious Principles; and, confequently, are obliged to affert, that there is no Necessity of Regeneration, or of the Grace of Faith in order to do what is Good and pleasing to God, directly contrary to the express Doctrine of the Holy Scripture.-That tho' B. maintains the certain Salvation of the Elect, it is in such a Way, as at once deprives the divine Perfections of their Glory in their Salvation, and the Saints of all their present solid Peace and Joy; because upon his Principles, no Believer in the World, can poffibly know, that his Name is written in Heaven, or that he is the Object of electing Love; and, therefore, cannot be affured of his Perseverance, without an Affurance of which, none can be affured of their future Happiness. Thus it appears, that Baxterianism leads to Arminianism, and that to Socinianism, or to a Denial

Denial of almost all the peculiar Doctrines of divine Revelation; no Wonder, therefore, that Socinianism ends in Deism. The Reason why Infidelity spreads so much at this Time, is, Men throw off a Regard to the Doctrines of the Scripture; and when they have done that, without much Difficulty, or Apprehension of Danger, they reject Revelation itself.

B. was highly offended at this Discourse of C. and very ill resented, that he represented him as bordering upon Socinianism, in any evangelical Doctrine. But C. fully proved it by comparing the Sentiments of B., with what the Socinians say relating to the great Doctrine of Justification. Upon which he was put to Silence, not being able to offer any Thing in his own Vindication. Thus the Conversation ended. After each Gentleman had paid his Compliments to their common Friend, who entertained them in a generous Manner, during the Debate, which was carried on severalDays, they took Leave of one another, and returned to the respective Places of their Residence.

My being present all the Time this Debate lasted, was no small Satisfaction to me, because I had an Opportunity of hearing what might be objected to Calvinism, by Persons who had long studied those Points, and were very expert in managing the Controversy, and of hearing the Calvinist, answer sully all that they were able to object to his Principles. This Account of the Debate, is so far as I am able

to remember, true, just, and impartial. The Reader I leave to determine for himself, on which Side the Truth is; tho' I, for my own Part, cannot but think, that C. was on the Side of Truth, and that S. A. and B. were against it. The Reader will doubtless observe, that S. A. and B. sometimes used provoking Language to C. but that he did not return it to them.

28 JY 58

FINIS.





